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ORDINATION-SERMON.



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THEOLOGICAL

EIGHT SERMONS

PREACHED BEFORE

THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD,

TOGETHER WITH

A S E R M O N,

DELIVERED AT

AN ORDINATION,

Holden at Christ-church by

THE BISHOP OF DURHAM

ON TRINITY SUNDAY

IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD, 1810,

BY

EDWARD GARRARD^V MARSH.

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ORDINATION-SERMON,

PREACHED AT

CHRIST-CHURCH IN OXFORD

ON

TRINITY SUNDAY, 1810.

John xxi. 15, 16, 17.

Jesus saith to Simon Peter. ‘Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?’ He saith unto him. ‘Yea, lord. Thou knowest, that I love thee.’ He saith unto him. ‘Feed my lambs!’ He saith unto him again the second time. ‘Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?’ He saith unto him. ‘Yea, lord. Thou knowest, that I love thee.’ He saith unto him. ‘Feed my sheep.’ He saith unto him the third time. ‘Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?’ Peter was grieved, because he said unto him the third time—‘Lovest thou me?’—: and he said unto him. ‘Lord, thou knowest all things. Thou knowest, that I love thee.’ Jesus saith unto him. ‘Feed my sheep!’

THE few conversations, which our saviour had with his disciples after his resurrection, seem to have been directed exclusively to the establishment and regulation of that church, the seed of which

was sown in his blood. The discourse, which has been just recited, was held particularly with Simon Peter; to whom however it is very observable, that our lord on many occasions addressed admonitions and promises, which were equally designed for the other apostles: for, saint Peter being of a forward and zealous character, who often spoke for the rest of the disciples, it was natural, that he should also receive answers in their name.

The purport of the dialogue before us is very plain; nor is there any part of it, which can admit of the least variety of interpretation, except the question—‘ Lovest thou me more than these?’ Some persons have explained this question, as if it meant—‘ Lovest thou me more than these other ‘ disciples love me?’—: which is a question, that neither Peter could answer, nor our saviour be very readily believed to have asked. It was never his practice to excite jealousies, but to allay them; and, if this passage were to be understood in the sense, which has just been mentioned, it would be the only instance in the history of the Messiah, in which he put his followers upon comparing their respective merits, or led them to claim a superiority above each other.

Others, to get rid of this objection, have paraphrased the expression thus—‘ Lovest thou me ‘ more than thou lovest these fishing-nets and ‘ implements of thy trade? Lovest thou me more ‘ than thou lovest thy secular gains and employ- ‘ ment?’—: which, besides introducing a new idea, which the history of the transaction does not require, is a far less natural and pertinent inquiry than this—‘ Lovest thou me more than thou lovest ‘ these apostles?’ The question, so understood, appears to be so much in place, so suitable to the character of our saviour, so full of meaning and instruction, that perhaps I should only weaken the effect of the sentiment by attempting to defend the interpretation.

Of the whole text then, thus explained, it is observable, that our saviour thrice asks saint Peter, whether he loves him better than he loves the other apostles; and upon his replying in the affirmative he thrice charges him to feed his sheep; from which facts these two maxims offer themselves to our consideration, first, that for those, who would feed the flock of Christ, the chief and most necessary qualification is to love Christ more than they love their dearest earthly connexions,

secondly, that those, who so love Christ, cannot display their love of him more acceptably than by feeding his sheep. Both these are topics, which are highly interesting upon the present occasion; and the triple repetition of them both gives them a powerful claim upon our attention.

In the first place then, to affirm, that the chief and most requisite qualification for those, who would feed the flock of Christ, is to love Christ above all contending objects of their affection, is to affirm a position, the principle of which is not questioned, when it is applied to any other pursuit. To excel in any art or employment, to attain eminence in a particular profession, to make advances in science or acquire distinction in literature, no one doubts, that it is necessary first to love the pursuit, in which excellence is thought desirable. Parents study the bent of their children's genius, before they determine their destination to a military or a naval life, to a trade or a profession; and those, who do not attend to this rule, are seldom gladdened by a sight of their children's success or even saved from the mortification of witnessing their disappointment. Why then should not the

same thing be true in a profession, of all others the most difficult and important? Those are unquestionably the best stewards and servants, who have the highest regard for their master's interests. Surely therefore upon every principle of fair analogy they must be the best qualified to become stewards of the mysteries of Christ, who have the most earnest love for Christ himself.

But, whatever may be our opinion upon the analogy of this statement, our saviour has put the truth of it out of all doubt, by requiring in this text a love of himself, superior to our love of the world, as a plain, simple, and paramount qualification for the office of feeding his sheep. All other qualifications are thrown into the shade in its presence. They are passed by, unnoticed. The prominent, indispensable, distinguishing requisite is, as it well may be, that love for the heavenly shepherd, without which the sheep, consigned to our custody, are likely to go to ruin. Other requisites there doubtless are, and such as are of great extent and diversity. But they are of secondary consideration and vary with times and occasions. Thus a polite age will require a polite education in its ministers, a learned age will demand higher acquisitions in learn-

ing, a martial age will call for a bolder character and a more determined spirit of resolution, because every people will be managed with most success by persons, who have qualities congenial to their own; neither would similar attainments be proper for a missionary among uninstructed Indians, and for the pastor of a refined and cultivated parish. But the grand fundamental quality of a love of Christ is that only character of the true christian priesthood, which is indelible. No changes can affect, no circumstances diminish, no situations modify its necessity.

Let us consider then, what love this is, which is so essential to our faithful discharge of the ministerial office. It is to be above any affection, which we retain on earth. If a christian's heart must be in heaven, how much more the heart of a christian minister! If the sheep must love their owner, how much more the shepherd! He, who teaches others, must undoubtedly first teach himself: and of all points, necessary to be taught a christian, there is none more essential than the love of God and of Christ. He, who comes to follow Christ, as his minister, must love him more than parents, sisters, neighbours, children, wife, or kindred, and must

be ready, if it should be required of him, to leave them all for his sake. He must in short have set his affections upon him, as other men do, or rather more than they do, upon the particular objects of their ambition, and have made his service the main business and end of his life.

And in truth he is worthy of all this regard. Who is there, that can have any claim upon our esteem, within any limits of proportion comparable to that of our lord and master, of him, who, being lord of all, became the servant of all, and stooped even to the death upon the cross for us, miserable sinners, who lay in darkness and the shadow of death, that he might exalt us to the kingdom of heaven and make us heirs of everlasting life, who, when our parents had transmitted our nature to us in a corrupted form, himself voluntarily took upon him that nature, that he might heal and purify it and present it to us in a renewed and sanctified and perfect condition? He surely is worthy of all our love; and they, who consecrate themselves to his service, ought to love him better than earthly friends or indeed than any thing earthly.

Nor ought this only to be regarded, as their

chief recommendation—it is in fact the foundation of their pretensions to that office. To make a mere matter of convenience of that sacred function, to seek it, as a subsistence, and not as an occasion of glorifying him, whom we serve in it, is to profane it; nor must we think, that, because we are skilled in languages or advanced in science, we are therefore fit for a situation, which requires faculties of a very different order. It is represented, as a curse in scripture, when men should say—‘ Put me (I pray thee) into one of the priest’s offices, that I may eat a piece of bread.’ The only just ground of our coming to the altar is, that we may testify our love of Christ; and though all, who serve at it, are ordained to live of it, yet are they not justified in desiring to serve at it, merely in order, that they may live of it. Prospects of preferment, however tempting, are no good reason for seeking to feed the flock of Christ; which they, who would do it conscientiously, must attempt not from any love of the gains to be made by it, but from their love of the work itself. They, who seek to do it, must first answer this question of our lord’s—‘ Lovest thou me more than these, whatsoever they are, that thou lovest, whether parents or friends or livings?’—: and

it would be better now to leave the church without receiving the holy employment, for the sake of which you entered it, than not first to answer this question in the affirmative.

It is for this reason, that our church has set at the head of the other questions, which are proposed to candidates at their ordination—‘Do you trust, that you are inwardly moved by the holy ghost to take upon you this office and ministry, to serve God for the promoting of his glory and the edifying of his people?’—, because as all good dispositions of mind are derived from the holy ghost, and as the love of Christ is the best of them, so on the other hand no one, who has not the love of Christ within him, is moved to serve at the altar.

If farther we would satisfy ourselves, whether we have indeed this love of Christ or no, there is one test, by which we may try ourselves, of all others perhaps the least equivocal. If we love Christ, we shall also love the souls, whom he has redeemed. If we have a true sense of the work, which he has done for us, we shall also be desirous to do every thing in our power to promote it. If we feel, as we ought to do, our lost condition with-

out him, we shall be eager to extend and disseminate the blessings of his redemption.

These then are the views, which a sincere christian will have in entering into that holy profession. It is a profession, which furnishes the means of subserving with the greatest efficacy the most gracious purpose of divine mercy; and he, whose heart is possessed with a conviction of the inestimable value of a human soul, in any slight degree resembling theirs, who have joy in heaven over one sinner, that repenteth, will aspire with the earnestness of compassion to any situation, in which he may haply be made instrumental towards saving one of them.

The proper question therefore for every candidate, who applies for ordination, to put to his own bosom, is—‘ What is my object in coming hither ? ‘ Am I seeking my own profit, or the profit of ‘ many, that they may be saved ? Am I urged in ‘ short by the love of Christ or of myself, of godli- ‘ ness or of gain ? ’ And this is a question, which every one must determine for himself. No examiner can settle it. He may investigate the claims of his candidates with respect to scholarship or attainments. He may ascertain the grounds of

their faith, and may inquire into their character in the world. But all beyond this must be left between them and God. If they have been guilty of no gross offences such as are cognizable to all men, the human examiner cannot penetrate deeper. It is to God, that they must answer the question—‘ Lovest thou me more than these?’—; and it will be well for them, if they can answer it, as Peter did—‘ Lord, thou knowest all things. Thou knowest, that I love thee.’

I proceed therefore to the second part of my subject; which is to show, that those, who love Christ before and above all things, can have no better way of displaying their love for him than by feeding his lambs. Indeed how is it possible, that they should display it better? Jesus Christ himself laid down his life for the sheep: and how can a disciple of Jesus more properly testify his regard for him than by striving to feed and nourish those sheep, for whom his master died? Our blessed lord seems indeed to have delighted in the title of a shepherd. He is the true, the good shepherd, the shepherd of the everlasting covenant, the shepherd, who laid down his life for the

sheep: and, even after he had done so, he took yet further care for their support and sustenance in that conversation, which has supplied us with a text; in which, after asking Peter, whether he loved him more than others, he thrice charged him, saying—‘ Feed my sheep !’

Surely therefore we must admit, that this is the peculiar and characteristic office of a christian pastor. Other duties belong to that character, as relieving the sick, clothing the naked, feeding the hungry, benefiting the oppressed, as well as personal holiness and integrity; all which indeed are incumbent upon christians in general, though they are more especially required from those, who approach nearer to the sanctuary of God. But to the clergy exclusively is consigned the task of feeding the flock of Christ. This is their main business, the purpose, for which they are set apart; and, unless they do this, they serve to no use, but by shutting out others, that would do it, even frustrate the object of their mission.

So also, with respect to ministerial employments, it is undoubtedly becoming in a minister to employ much of his time in literature, ancient or modern, to exercise the office of a teacher, or

even to amuse himself with lighter and less serious pursuits, if they are innocent. But still his main business, and that, to which he ought to devote the best faculties of his mind, is to tend the flock of Christ, over which the holy ghost has made him an overseer, and in imitation of the good shepherd, from whom he derives his authority, to comfort them with his rod and his staff, to make them lie down in green pastures, to lead them beside the still waters, to restore their souls, and to lead them in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

And what are these good pastures, in which he should lead his sheep, and with which consequently from the very nature of his calling he should be intimately acquainted himself? They are the holy scriptures, from which and from which only he can derive those waters of comfort, which will refresh and delight their spiritual natures; for they alone have the words of eternal life. The priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth. Many books may be read for example of life and instruction of manners. But this is the fountain-head of doctrine. This is the word, which he is called on to divide rightly,

and which, when so divided, is able to make all, who hear it, wise unto salvation.

The scriptures therefore both of the old and new testament ought to be the never-failing study of the christian minister. From these he will draw every truth he presses upon the attention of his hearers; and to these he will refer for the truth of them. None indeed of its precious doctrines are to be inculcated to the neglect of the others. Yet there is one doctrine, to which our church has this day called our attention, and which, even independently of that appointment, deserves our peculiar regard, as being that cardinal one, on which all other doctrines in the blessed scheme of our redemption appear to turn. I trust therefore, that I shall be forgiven, if I say a few words here on that mysterious, but most important doctrine of a trinity in unity.

The doctrine is mysterious and above the reach of human comprehension. But yet, had not the knowledge of it concerned us nearly, doubtless it would never have been revealed. In fact it is a doctrine of infinite moment; for while it maintains on the one hand the sacredness of the divine unity, it assures us on the other of our reconcilia-

tion to the divine nature by showing, that one of the blessed persons in it has condescended to assume and another to sanctify ours. Nor is it in other respects a barren doctrine or in its character merely speculative: for it holds out to our contemplation each person in the ever adorable trinity, as in his own proper office the object of our religious obedience. We repent unto God, the father, whom we have offended by our sins; we believe in God, the son, who has redeemed us by his blood; and it is only through God, the holy ghost, directing and influencing our wills, that we find it in our hearts to do either.

This therefore is a doctrine, which the true pastor of Christ's people will by no means omit to dwell upon: nor will its deep and unsearchable nature deter him from laying it open even to the meanest capacities; for the meanest capacities may receive, though the proudest cannot comprehend it. It is a doctrine, addressed to our faith rather than to our understandings: and faith is a gift, which God has often vouchsafed in abundant measure, where he has been comparatively sparing of others.

Nevertheless this doctrine, though it may be so

comprehensive as to pervade the whole of christianity, yet does not itself constitute the whole of it. Many other saving truths, too numerous to be even mentioned here, are comprised in it; and they will all be in turn drawn out from it for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ. Many too will be more insisted on than others, as being particularly suited to the necessities or the prejudices of the hearers. Every heresy and every vice has its countervailing doctrine; and the vigilant shepherd will lead his sheep not only through all the pastures of the word of God, but into those pastures especially, which may be most convenient for their present health and condition.

Nor is that other part of a shepherd's office, which consists in distinguishing between the healthy and the distempered sheep, in keeping the former from infection, and applying the necessary, however painful, remedies to the latter, to be neglected, though this part of his duty requires much caution and discretion and ought not to be adventured in without advice, while at the same time he will use all diligence to recover the lost and bring back the strayed to the flock.

But above all these things the faithful minister will endeavor to impress upon his people a serious regard for the welfare of their own souls, to draw off their affections from earthly and sensual concerns, to convince them of their lost condition by nature, and of the means, adopted by almighty goodness, for their recovery; and he will urge them by example and precept to adorn the doctrine of God, their saviour, in all things, by believing his word and honestly endeavoring in dependence on his all-sufficient graces to perform his will. These things he will do constantly, as saint Paul did, in season and out of season, publicly and from house to house, as well knowing, that his own life and the life of his parishioners is wrapped up in them; and by so doing he will prove himself a workman, that needeth not to be ashamed, and faithfully feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

If this be indeed our case, my brethren, happy are we. Happy are all they, who so love Christ as to feed his lambs. It is no unreasonable task, to which he has called us. He did not desire us to feed his sheep, before he had first bled for them

himself; and we may rest convinced, that as no one will ever be called by him to feed his sheep, but those, who love him, so on the other hand they, who love him more than they love any other being in the universe, can never have a task more agreeable to themselves or more certain to be accepted by their heavenly saviour, than that of feeding his lambs.

Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our lord, Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make us perfect in every good work to do his will, working in us that, which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever! Amen!

S E R M O N S

PREACHED BEFORE

THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD.

S E R M O N I.

Genesis i. 3.

God said—‘ Let there be light!’—, and there was light.

THERE is no feature more striking in the divine œconomy of the universe than the systematic employment of means by a being, who has no need of them. Though his word is fate, and his will its own executioner, yet in the ordinary course of his providence he seldom performs any act by his word or will alone, but chooses, for wise reasons no doubt, to accomplish his ends by a slower and more circuitous process. He has therefore enacted laws for the world, which he made, and, though it was in his power to vary his proceedings infinitely, has yet ordained, that one thing should follow another in regular dependence and invariable succession. So orderly indeed and so exact is the mechanism of the divine government, that although it would be preposterous to suppose

him tied to any method of acting, but such as his own wisdom had prescribed to him, we are yet too apt to regard the established order, as necessary, and, by the constant habit of observing plants arise from seed, heat proceed from the sun, and rain descend from the clouds, are led to consider the arrangement, which connects them, not as an arbitrary decree, but as an eternal and unchangeable law.

In opposition to all such notions the two first chapters of our bible assure us, that these effects were in their creation prior to their present causes, and that there was a time, when second causes were nonentities, that the lord, God, not only formed the heavens and the earth out of nothing, but made every plant of the field, before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field, before it grew, and lastly, that as plants existed before seed, so also did light before the sun: for, though it was on the first day, that according to the sublime description in my text God said—‘Let there be light!’—, and there was light, it was not till the fourth, that he made those two great lights, which have continued ever since to rule the day and the night. Indeed since that week of wonders he has occa-

sionally found it necessary, lest from being unseen he should soon be forgotten also, to reassert his neglected deity. He has from time to time suspended or reversed the laws, which he originally imposed on nature. Thus he bade the sun stand still for Joshua, and caused it to go back for Hezekiah; and, although these occurrences have been rare, they have been sufficient to furnish us with abundant proof, that the almighty needs no instruments for the execution of his will.

Nevertheless on the other hand it is equally obvious, that he has given a decided preference to that method of systematic contrivance, which his dealings usually present to us. Even in his miracles themselves, in the act of reversing or altering his own appointments, instead of universally rejecting the use of means he has often satisfied himself with selecting such as were incapable of contributing in a natural way towards the result, which followed them. When for example he brought by an east wind the locusts over the land of Egypt, and parted the waters of the red sea asunder, he would do neither, till Moses had first stretched out his rod, although the rod could have no power at all over the wind, nor

any influence upon the sea. So too, when the walls of Jericho fell flat before Joshua, that event was forerun by an orderly procession and the blast of trumpets, while yet there could be no natural connexion whatever between the means adopted and the effect produced.

But this partiality of the almighty, if I may so call it, for the intervention of subordinate causes, as well as his entire independence of them, have been sometimes displayed together by the employment of instruments, which were not only short, but naturally destructive of the ends, attained by them. When Gideon's little army broke their pitchers and by the light of their lamps overthrew the numberless hosts of Midian, the instrument, although weak beyond all comparison with the greatness of the effect, was yet calculated to strike terror and therefore was so far suited to its purpose. But, when Elisha cast salt into a spring with a view of fructifying an unproductive soil, the natural result, if any, would have been barrenness, not fertility; and, when at a later period our lord put clay upon a blind man's eyes, the use of such an ointment must have appeared likely to impede rather than to assist the restoration of his

sight. It would seem indeed, as if by this series of contradictions to established order the almighty had designed to convince his creatures, that the appointment of second causes in the ordinary course of his government arises from choice, not necessity, and that the only connexion between any cause and its consequence is the will of the universal creator. Hence a proverb says—‘The horse is prepared against the day of battle. But safety is of the lord.’ Hence also Jonathan said to his armour-bearer—‘Let us go over unto the garrison of these uncircumcised! It may be, that the lord will work for us: for there is no restraint to the lord to save by many or by few’—: in which words, while he declared his persuasion, that his own cooperation was necessary in the order of the divine proceedings, he shewed his belief also, that it was necessary only, as an instrument, which in God’s hand would accomplish much or little or nothing, just as he might think fit to appoint for it.

The intervention therefore of second causes is no impeachment to the omnipotence of God: for he works with equal ease either with, without, or against them. The preference, which he has

shown for this manner of operation, must have proceeded from free will, not from necessity. What were the motives, what the high purposes, or what the beneficial ends, in reference to which this preference is adopted, it may not be within our sphere to discover: for who can by searching find out God? But, though we may not be able to investigate all the reasons, which have determined the choice of Omnipotence, it may be useful to pursue a few of those considerations, which immediately present themselves, and which may yet be sufficient to justify it even in our esteem.

Without the intervention of means in the first place all moral agency must be excluded: for God would then be the only agent in the universe. He would have to perform his wonders upon senseless matter or at best upon passive intelligence; and he would thus lose all the glory, which results from the reflection of his attributes in the moral conduct and voluntary service of his creatures.

Could it however be granted, that our natures would remain unchanged by such an alteration, still the effect of it upon our feelings would be a loss instead of a benefit. The miracles in particular, which would then become common, would

cease to be regarded, as proofs of the divine presence or power ; for we soon learn to overlook the excellence, with which we are familiar. Otherwise the established succession of seasons and indeed the whole ordinary course of Providence exhibit a spectacle, equally or even more wonderful than that supposed : for they exhibit a series of uniform and continued miracles, which he, who can regard with indifference, would doubtless be indifferent also to every instance even of creative power, if such were the usual train and common method of his proceedings.

This perhaps would be the effect, when we had ceased to be dazzled by the blaze of repeated miracles, and our minds had become reconciled to the glare. In the mean time the effect of such a system would be not so much to delight as to confound and fatigue us. Never knowing, what next miracle to expect, or perhaps expecting what could not be granted, we should look on with silent amazement upon a scheme, in which we ourselves were passive, and might probably wish in vain for a system, more corresponding to our feelings and better suited to our cooperation. We have at least one instance upon record of a system-

atic departure from the accustomed course of the divine government in the direction of the wandering Israelites, who were guided by a pillar of a cloud and of fire, fed with manna and quails from heaven, and supplied with drink from a river, which followed them in all their journeys. Yet what was the effect of this magnificent provision? They very soon tired of manna, and required bread, the common growth of the ground. They preferred to drink water from their own cistern, and at length desired even an earthly king instead of God, that they might be like the other nations.

But, not to dwell on the influence, which perpetual miracles would have upon our own conduct and happiness, the present system of the universe comes recommended to us by reasons, which depend on the nature of the thing itself: for though the production of effects without second causes is to us under the present system the most palpable proof of the interposition of God, yet doubtless the production of them by second causes is the most magnificent and glorious method of his operation, because in the first instance only the effect is to be produced, in the second both effect and

cause too, which are equally difficult, if both must be created. When God said—‘ Let there be light!’—, and there was light, it was but one act, though indeed a most stupendous act of omnipotence. But, ever since he has made the sun its depositary, its conveyance to us requires a continued series of acts, which none, but his providence, can supply. His arm, that never tires, is momentarily stretched out to replenish that splendid luminary, to direct the course of its beams, and to qualify our eyes to receive them; and, should he even for a single moment intermit any one of these connected acts, we should that instant be lost in total darkness. The freedom and glory of his gifts is therefore so far from being impaired by the employment of subordinate agents, that this very circumstance serves to set it forth in the clearest colours: for it certainly shows less constancy in goodness, less resolved and persevering love, to confer a blessing instantaneously, than to construct and to keep in order a chain of concurrent causes, by which it may be communicated.

Yet farther, this method of the divine government is not only the most glorious to the con-

triver, as displaying most copiously the unlimitable perfections of Omnipotence. It is also the most consonant to that notion of beauty, which he has given us, inasfar as a regularly constituted system is more beautiful than an unconnected succession of solitary acts. Can any one doubt, that the present constitution of the universe, embellished with its numberless suns and unbounded variety of systems, is more beautiful to our apprehension than the same infinity of creation would be, if supported by interpositions without order and power without contrivance? God is a God of order and will have the beauty of order as well as the glory of omnipotence appear in his works. Could we explore the universe, as a whole, and survey it in its parts, we should be qualified to perceive and appreciate, and we could not fail to acknowledge and admire the harmony of this divine plan. How noble an object is the sun, even if we withdraw our thoughts from the light, which it bestows! What beauty is there in the variety of hill and dale, of trees and turf, of river and ocean, summer and winter, night and day, though considered separately from the beneficial ends, which they are formed to fulfil! Yet

all this beauty we should lose, if light, heat, shade, and shelter were to be created independently, when they were wanted, without this admirable arrangement of means to diffuse them. Doubtless it was a view of this vast machinery and of the astonishing purposes it was calculated to answer, that awakened such rapture throughout the host of creation, when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy: for now the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork. One day telleth another, and one night certifieth another. There is neither speech, nor language. But their voices are heard among them. Their sound is gone out into all lands, and their words into the ends of the world.

Such are some of the advantages, discernible even to our eyes, in the present œconomy of the universe. I am much mistaken however, if this preference for intermediate agency, founded on its intrinsic excellence and beauty as well as on its expediency for our comfort and improvement, which has been thus traced in the works of nature, will not be found equally to pervade that

dispensation of grace and indeed to explain many of the difficulties attending it, in which men act, as second causes, in the hand of the great artificer: for the ways of God both in the formation and in the reformation, in the government and redemption of the world, are uniform, analogous, and consistent. In both he makes use of means; and though on extraordinary occasions he has sometimes chosen to accomplish his objects without them, yet this manner of operation through the intervention of second causes, besides being more beautiful, tends more to the glory of his omnipotence than the other. Even in this latter work the almighty has no need of subordinate ministers: and yet here also the employment of them is both a grace and a glory to his blessed scheme of salvation.

A short survey will be sufficient to convince us of this truth. For surely the almighty had no want of any means to repair all the mischiefs of our fall at the beginning, when his mere fiat could in an instant have created a new race of beings with powers more capable of serving him or have totally changed the natures of those already existing. He had but to speak the word, and it would

have been done, to command, and it would have stood fast: and, should he even now please to say—‘ Let man die, and another order of beings ‘ be created in his stead!’—doubtless it would be so. He turneth man to destruction. Again he saith—‘ Come again, ye children of men!’ But what would then become of that beautiful fabric, of which the parts are so fitly joined together, and of which the height, the depth, and the breadth are worthy of all admiration, the redemption of the world through Jesus Christ, the sanctification of the elect through the holy ghost, the ministry of angels, the glorious company of the apostles, the goodly fellowship of the prophets, the noble army of martyrs?

This is surely a still more glorious assemblage of means than that, employed in nature; and there is a beauty in it, which may be supposed to have recommended it to the mind of him, who is the common lord of both. At the same time we cannot be too deeply impressed with the conviction, that they are but means, and that they are all of them, except those, in which the son of God and the holy spirit are immediately concerned, far too humble to pretend to any real efficiency in the

great business of salvation. It may indeed appear a degradation to thinking beings to rank them among the means, employed by omnipotence; and they may be thought rather to intercept and appropriate some portion of that praise, which must otherwise pass, undiminished, to the creator. But such is not the light, in which the apostles regard the effect and merit of their labours. ‘Who is ‘Paul,’ (say they,) ‘and who is Apollos, but ministers, by whom ye believed, even as the lord gave ‘to every man?’ They are agents certainly, and moral and free and therefore responsible agents. But yet what does the effect of all human co-operation amount to? We are still, the best of us, but subordinate workmen, who do the task, assigned to us, but understand not the process, by which it is to be rendered effectual. The success of ministerial labours is often such as to elude the keenest observation, and conducted in a secret and mysterious method, of which the minister himself is unconscious. So is the kingdom of God as if a man should cast seed into the ground and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how.

When a man has constructed a hive and enticed

a swarm of bees into it, they work-according to the fashion, which he has prescribed for them: and yet they work freely. It is even at their option not to serve at all; and, if they pleased, they could easily transfer their company to another hive and carry their honey with them. Not unlike this is the work, which man performs in the business of salvation. He discharges his appointed task, and he discharges it freely. But he cannot deviate from the exact line, marked out for him, without marring the work, which it was his duty to aid; and consequently at the close, if the work is imperfect, the fault is his, but if perfect, the glory is God's.

Neither is the selection of humble means for the execution of great purposes any disparagement to the being, who employs them. On the contrary, as it is less to produce an effect by a cause, which seems adequate to it, than by one, which is inferior, it surely follows, that, if the almighty had confided the publication of the gospel to angels, the glory of the sovereign would have been impaired in the same proportion, in which the dignity of the ministers would be exalted. It is because we have this treasure in earthen

vessels, that the excellency of the power is of God: and though man's cooperation is required both for his own salvation and for that of others, yet undoubtedly first and last it is of God alone, and the human agent is nothing. Though the Israelites could only conquer, while Moses held up his hands, it was yet God and not Moses, who gave them the victory. Yea. 'All the inhabitants ' of the earth' (saith a prophet) 'are reputed, as ' nothing; and he doeth according to his will in ' the army of heaven and among the inhabitants ' of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say ' unto him—"What doest thou?" It is he, that ' sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the in- ' habitants thereof are as grasshoppers, that stretch- ' eth out the heavens, as a curtain, and spreadeth ' them out, as a tent, to dwell in, that bringeth the ' princes to nothing. He maketh the judges of the ' earth, as vanity.'

Nevertheless, it must be observed on the other hand, that though neither the means, nor the ministers of grace are any thing, but by the blessing of him, who ordained them, we are no more justified by their natural inefficacy in looking for the divine favour without them, than we are warranted

by the omnipotence of God over the natural world to require the performance of miracles. In fact the means adopted and the rules observed both in nature and in grace bear a striking similitude to each other. If in the natural world the lord, God, has ordained the sun to give light, appointed the atmosphere to convey, and adapted the eyes of men to receive and to enjoy it, in the moral he has assigned to his son the office of redemption, sent his spirit to convey the benefit of it to the soul, and lastly endowed that soul itself with an aptitude to receive the suggestions of the spirit as well as through them also the blessings of redemption. We do not in a word expect any effect to be wrought in either system without means: and such are the means, ordained for conveying to us the blessings of both, that the failure of any of them would often defeat all the advantage, arising from a conjunction of the rest. With no eyes or with closed eyes we could derive no benefit from the sun itself; and without a corresponding effort in the soul redemption must be superfluous, and grace useless: for spiritual blindness will no less incapacitate us for the light of grace than corporeal blindness will for the light of nature; and whoever

should expect to be saved without exertion, because salvation cometh of the lord, would act as unreasonably as he, who, because light is the gift of God, should hope to see without opening his eyes. The means indeed in both are only efficacious through the blessing of him, who ordained them. But still they are necessary in both; and it would be no less erroneous to look for salvation without the use of the word, the sacraments, meditation, and prayer, than it would be to ascribe to these means of grace the glory of our salvation.

The general result therefore is glory to God in the highest. From the beginning to the end he is the author of all. We have planted. We have sown. But God giveth the increase. The first will, the second cause, the intermediate agency are all alike from him, who produced the effect not by a single act, but through a concatenated succession of wonders.

What a vast apparatus of intermediate, corresponding agents does this survey present to us, all free in their respective operations, all tending towards the same end, yet all upholden and directed by the same controlling supervisor, who made both

it and them, and who overrules their actions without destroying their liberty! All this God might have brought about, had it so pleased him, by his providence alone. In this sense also he might have said—‘ Let there be light!’—and light would have arisen in darkness to illumine the shadow of death. But yet, if I may be allowed the expression, he acts most like himself and in a manner most worthy of his majesty, when he accomplishes his work by a series of secondary causes. Saint Paul’s conversion was occasioned by a light from heaven without any cooperation from earthly ministers. But who does not more admire the beauty of so many coordinate laborers, allotted to their respective tasks, and concurring in their several stations, yet without compulsion, to the great end, to which he has called them? For God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers. Surely we ought much rather to adore the condescension as well as the harmony of that scheme, by which men are themselves rendered, in however low a degree, instrumental to their own salvation and admitted to a share in that work, to which their natures were unfitted, and their dispositions adverse. There is

more skill shown in managing the instincts of living creatures and directing the passions of a free people than in setting any inanimate machinery in action. But to sway a rebellious world, to restore their natures and to heal their corruptions, and all this without interfering to such a degree with their freedom as to destroy their moral responsibility, is a task, reserved for omnipotence, and can only be contemplated with astonishment and awe.

These indeed are feelings, with which a view either of nature or of grace is alike qualified to impress us. In both we see the same undeviating contrivance, proceeding by settled steps to its purpose, by steps, which are themselves ends and no less beautiful than that, to which they conspire. He hath made every thing beautiful in his time. Every link in this chain of wonders is a fit subject for admiration and gratitude. But, to behold the scheme of providence in its beauty, to perceive its coherence and discern its fair proportions, we must regard them all united. We must know both the design and the execution, must survey at one glance the arrangement of progressive means, by which it was conducted from its commencement

to its close, from nothing to maturity. This however is a view beyond the condition of our present nature. Even angels only desire to look into it; and it can no more be within the ken of human penetration than a bee can discover the purpose, for which the hive has been provided for him, or a war-horse understand the order and design of the battle. But, though we cannot discern it now, it may be one of those beatific privileges, reserved for the saints in heaven. It may be revealed gradually so as at every new glimpse of its beauty to fill the glorified spirit with fresh draughts of delight and clearer perceptions of the divine wisdom and glory: and, if this is indeed to be a part of our reward, how can we ever conceive a greater? Even here a contemplation of the wonders of creation and of its author, miserably imperfect as our knowledge is, and faint as are all our conceptions of him, is sufficient to absorb our minds in such rapture as for a time to deaden our relish for all worldly satisfactions whatsoever. What then must be our enjoyment, when we can look not upon, but through the boundless regions of space, and trace the connected plan of Providence in all worlds, when God himself shall guide our sight,

enlarge our conceptions, and not only wipe away all tears, but remove all darkness from our eyes? The thought of such a vision is enough to overpower our fancy; and the fruition of it must be blessedness for evermore. How then ought we with all the powers of our minds to bless him, who, when he might by his mere word have called all things into being without method or beauty or regularity, yet chose to construct his creation in a scheme, that his subjects might comprehend, and filled it with contrivance, that they might admire it! How deeply ought we to be humbled, when we find ourselves to be but drops in such a sea, and how grateful, when we perceive, that, though drops, we shall yet be enabled to traverse, to comprehend, and to measure the ocean, in which we flow!

Let us seek to give glory to the God, who ordained this display of magnificence, and ascribe to the father, the son, and the holy ghost, who is the author of our faith and finisher of our salvation, all honour and worship for ever! Amen!

S E R M O N I I.

Deuteronomy xxix. 29.

The secret things belong unto the lord, our God. But those things, which are revealed, belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.

THE almighty has evidently chosen to wrap most of his proceedings in mystery, and to unveil only such parts of them to his creatures as are necessary either for the promotion of their comforts or for the regulation of their conduct. While therefore he has scattered over the face of nature a profusion and variety of blessings, with the properties of which, so far as can be wanted for any practical purpose, not only men, but beasts are conversant, their hidden substance, their modes of being, their intimate and essential natures have baffled the search of philosophy in all ages of the world. Men have found, that though there goes forth a light from the presence of God above the brightness of the sun, which is a source of life, comfort,

and instruction to all creatures of the universe, yet he is himself not to be searched by it. Clouds and darkness are about his throne; and the secret of his providence remains and must still remain inscrutable. Lo! These things, which we see and know, these things which we feel and experience—lo! these are parts of his ways. But after all our inquiries, in spite of all our discoveries, how little a portion is heard of him! But the thunder of his power who can understand?

If this then be the case in earthly things, which are discernible to our senses and familiar to our observation, what wonder is it, that the same remark should hold true of heavenly subjects, which are further removed from our apprehension? If there are hidden things in nature, we cannot be surprised, that there should also be hidden things in religion. Nevertheless enough light has always been afforded even here to guide erring creatures into life and favour, and much besides to cheer as well as to enlighten the path of their pilgrimage. Curiosity alone is that, which has never been gratified. There are mysteries, which even angels desire to look into and are not permitted; and, while many things have been most graciously revealed

even to fallen men, to the end, that they may do the words of the divine law, there are secret things, secret (we are told) even from the son, considered in his human nature, which belong exclusively unto the lord, our God.

The day of the destruction of Jerusalem (we are distinctly informed by our saviour) was of this number. It is not for us to know the times, nor the seasons, which the father hath put in his own power. There are also problems in the divine government of nations, which no wit of man has been able to fathom, as, why he should execute his judgments upon one kingdom before or in preference to another, which to human observation appears to have deserved them more, or why he should extend to one people and not to another that word of life, which none can have deserved at all. But perhaps of all mysteries in the œconomy of the universe there is none, more adapted to silence and confound all attempt to explain or account for it, than that, which regards the subjection of inferior animals to the sad consequences of the transgression of Adam.

Happily however it is no part of our business to account for any of them. If we knew them, we

should not become better men by knowing them; nor yet, being ignorant of them, are we the worse: and therefore the almighty has judged it right to reserve them among the arcana of his providence and to say of them—‘The secret things belong unto the lord, your God.’ The admonition, thus given, is preceded in the text by a long prophecy of the future calamities of the Jewish nation, which, having been delivered, might of course be studied; and yet all curious inquiries into the time and manner of its accomplishment are plainly and strictly prohibited, and the speculations of God’s people are confined to such points as had been revealed. To seek after such a warning to dive into the mysterious sacredness of his treasure-house appears little less than daring presumption; and it is certainly the part of wisdom to refrain. They are among the secrets of his government and therefore best unknown. In regard to future events this has become an acknowledged maxim: and surely as to all other points also, which the goodness of God has concealed from us, as he had an undisputed right, so doubtless he had the wisest reasons for concealing them.

Indeed there seems to be a studied design, if I

may use the expression, in all the dispensations of Providence, to keep down that love of forbidden knowledge, which was instrumental to our fall, which still clings to our fallen nature, and which, unless repressed by frequent disappointment, would spare nothing, however sacred, that stood in the way of its gratification, but would arrogantly pursue its researches even to the throne of God. Hence his holy of holies, the seat of his presence and testimony of his covenant, was made accessible but to one only among the Jewish people and to him too but once in the year. Hence even those mysteries, as for instance that of the all-incomprehensible trinity, which he has at length seen fit to reveal, he has revealed but gradually, and has only from time to time withdrawn to a farther and a farther distance the horizon of human knowledge. So again the mystery of redemption was disclosed to Adam with sufficient clearness for Christ to become unto him all, that he wanted, wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption: and yet, after his life had reached its close, it was gradually opened more and more, till the time, that the day-star arose, the sun of righteousness appeared, and at length the perfect light now

shineth. The prophets, who in this interval foretold the doctrine, found the sphere of their vision gradually enlarged, yet always limited; and, while they were searching, what or what manner of time the spirit of Christ, which was in them, did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory, that should follow, unto them it was revealed, that all further investigation was useless, that as much had been revealed as could then be discovered, and that, as to all further disclosures, it was not unto themselves, but unto us, that they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them, that have preached the gospel.

Nevertheless, in defiance of all the discoveries, which have been successively made, notwithstanding the actual appearance of the son of God himself in the flesh, the mystery of godliness remains without all controversy a great mystery still; nor are we even yet able to comprehend the manner, in which God was made manifest in the flesh, how he, who is himself the only just one, the only justifier of others, can strictly be said to have been justified, the invisible seen, or the God of glory, who dwelleth in the light, which no man can

approach unto, received up to glory, nor lastly can we discern, by what unseen process this glorious combination of wonders concurs to the production of human godliness. Moreover there is one inference, that seems to result from this view of the divine proceedings, which it is hardly possible to suppress ; and that is, that, since the boundaries of human knowledge have been gradually extended by means of continually increasing revelations, to which not only the records of prophecy, but the writings of all antiquity bear witness, we discern the source, from which all knowledge of God and godliness is derived, and, since more was never known than had been previously revealed, are led to infer, that, had not God been pleased himself to reveal his existence to his creatures, the very idea of his being could not, any more than the good things, which he hath prepared for them, that love him, have entered into the heart of man.

But, whatever else in the divine government may be open to the preceding remarks, they will be found strikingly applicable—indeed they were chiefly suggested by a controversy, which has been agitated with unceasing heat from the age

of saint Paul's epistles to the present day, but without arriving at all nearer (with humble submission I speak it) to the conclusion of the whole matter. I mean that, relating to the divine decrees.

All christians (I believe) allow, that our eternal life is perfectly known to God; and (I believe) all the world admits, with the exception perhaps of professed antinomians, that on the whole it is better for us, that we should be ignorant of it. What it is better for us not to know, it may be presumed, that the almighty would conceal from us: and hence probably as well as from the nature of our faculties arises much of that impenetrable cloud, which hangs over these mysterious subjects. Indeed saint Paul has in a manner warned us against scrutinizing them too narrowly by exclaiming, when he had himself only approached them—‘ O
‘ the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and
‘ knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his
‘ judgments, and his ways past finding out!’

I am far however from meaning to assert, that this is altogether a forbidden topic. Saint Paul has himself, and so have the other apostles, made frequent allusion to it. Nay. Our Saviour himself has spoken of it; and all the things, which are

revealed, belong unto us and to our children. But there are, as appears from the experience of ages, secret things, pertaining to it, which belong unto the lord, our God, things, which we must probably be content to leave, as mysteries, so long as our present state continues. We shall find perhaps all the practical parts of this subject among the former class, and those, which are merely speculative, in the latter. So, when the angel of the lord had revealed to Manoah all the particulars, which concerned his comfort and conduct, he yet rebuked his further inquiries and said unto him—‘Why askest thou thus after my name, seeing it is secret?’ It is not therefore necessary, that all allusion to the doctrine of election should be avoided. In that of original sin and its consequences not only upon the human race, but upon the whole creation, which groaneth and travaileth in pain together, there are mysteries no less inscrutable than that of the divine predestination: and yet it is a doctrine, which it is not only right, but necessary to insist upon. So likewise the practical consequences of election, as for instance the certainty, though not the assurance, of salvation to those, who are rendered meet for it, and of perdition to all

others, are food for all souls and seasons, although when we come to discuss the question speculatively, it may have depths, which we cannot explore.

Indeed how can we wonder, that it should be so? ‘It belongeth unto God, nay, it is the glory of God, to conceal’—says Solomon;—‘He is a God, that hideth himself’—says Isaiah;—and, whenever we treat of his perfections or of his operations, we are necessarily driven to use language, rather brought down to the level of our own notions than strictly suitable to his nature. ‘If,’ (says an acute and perspicuous writer) ‘there be no succession of time in God, if eternity is but one enduring instant, if therefore past, present, and to come are all one with God, and all things are present to him, then it must follow, that foreknowledge and predestination are words, only fitted to our capacities, who cannot apprehend duration without succession of time, which measures all duration to us; and, there being no past or future in God, consequently, though he knows all things, yet he foreknows nothing, and, though he has decreed, yet not predecreeed, and there is no such thing as predestination in God (that is not properly and in the strictness of the thing),

‘ though the word is used in holy scripture, as
‘ many others are, only to comply with our weak-
‘ ness, who could understand nothing of God from
‘ words, spoken of him strictly and properly ac-
‘ cording to his incomprehensible nature.’

That the foregoing observations are strikingly true of the whole of the controversy in question, a very remarkable proof may be drawn from the singular variation of terms in scripture, whenever the subject is in any way glanced at. The same quotation, which by one evangelist is stated in these terms—‘ Their eyes they have closed’—, is in another—‘ He hath blinded their eyes.’ In the fourth chapter of Exodus the lord says of Pharoah—‘ I will harden his heart.’ But yet in the eighth chapter it is declared, that Pharaoh hardened his own heart: and in the second chapter of saint Paul’s epistle to the Philippians we have both modes of expression adopted in immediate succession thus—‘ Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling! For it is God, which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure’—: from all which an impartial reasoner might infer, that the truth is not a party to either system, being in fact above them both, because, like all other points, that regard

infinity, it is too remote from human conceptions to be fairly exhibited in human language; which at best must rather be accommodated to it than descriptive of it, so that, while one combatant assumes one set of texts, as the basis of his reasonings, and strives to stretch or compress all others into its dimensions, and while others are following the same process in an opposite direction, we are sure to be surrounded with difficulties on either hypothesis, which neither hypothesis can reconcile, because neither has been revealed in scripture.

There is accordingly, as might be expected on such a subject, nothing, which can strike an impartial observer of this controversy with more pain, than to perceive, how both parties are eager to charge their adversaries with consequences, which they disavow, and to disavow consequences, which are charged upon themselves; neither can any thing show more forcibly than this the difficulty of grasping the subject in all its connexion of cause and consequence, and keeping the whole in the mind together so as to take a clear, consistent, and comprehensive view of it. Another thing, which appears to demonstrate the same truth, is the proneness of both parties to mistake the opi-

nions and positions of each other and thus waste their time in attacking what is not defended or in defending what is not attacked. The dispute has often run upon words, the meaning of which was too extensive to admit of being clearly defined, and to which a different meaning being consequently attached by each disputant, each will be found occasionally to contend for that, which under a different form of expression was virtually acknowledged by the other.

Under such circumstances how much wiser would it be to abstain by common consent from a controversy, in which it is so difficult to distinguish friend from foe, and to retire to that common ground, in the possession of which both are equally interested, than to prolong the distractions of the church by maintaining a war without an enemy!

If indeed there be in the church enemies either to the faith or to the holiness of the gospel, who either by their life or doctrine disgrace its principles, deny its essential truths, or counteract its gracious designs, in the name of Christ and his religion let them be cast out of it! But this character cannot, in the present day at least, be fairly

imputed to the advocates, as such, of either side. Each party admits, that without holiness no man shall see the lord; and each maintains, that faith is essential to holiness. Both call on all men every where to repent. Both erenow have often, and it is the wish of many, that both should yet again take sweet counsel together and walk in the house of God, as friends. Many, who have agreed upon all other parts of our common religion, have yet differed and agreed to differ upon this. Such were notoriously many of the reformers and fathers of the church of England, and such their consciousness of the innocence of this difference and the safety of this union, that our seventeenth article has been generally confessed to be formed upon principles, which ought not to exclude any from the establishment, who, concurring in all other points, differ only upon a question, on which those, who framed it, were themselves divided in opinion. The strenuousness, with which both parties have labored to prove, that the article is on their side, is indeed to impartial judges a sufficient proof of its neutrality.

In the seventeenth article are asserted three positions, which no true member of the church of

England or of any christian church can deny, first, that of all mankind, who have been, are, or will be, a part only will be saved, while the rest will be condemned to everlasting perdition, secondly, that no individuals are comprised in the first class, but those, who are called, who obey the calling, who are justified freely, who are made sons of God by adoption, who are made like the image of his only begotten son, Jesus Christ, and walk religiously in good works, and lastly, that, whoever these individuals are, they are unknown to us, but known to God, who hath predestinated them to life from the beginning, even before the foundations of the world were laid. Now these three positions, whatever may be the sense, in which the last of them is understood, in some cases perhaps without attempting to impose any definite, restrictive sense upon it, may be and often have been asserted with equal strenuousness by persons, who have entertained opposite views of the nature of election. The remainder of the article relates to the contrary effects, produced by the consideration of this doctrine upon the godly and the carnal, in which there can be still less room for disagreement, provided we will only observe, how good men of both par-

ties profit by the doctrine, and how bad men wrest it to their ruin. As to all further, all curious inquiries, the article refers us to the word of God and to the general statements of holy scripture, as the sole authority for declaring the promises and revealing the will of that incomprehensible being, to whom all his works are known from the beginning of the creation.

Inferences indeed are continually drawn from the article, which are not stated in it; and it is upon the justice and truth of these inferences, that the whole controversy turns. But I believe, that the very same inferences are commonly drawn by the same persons, the same feelings are naturally excited, and the same difficulties raised on perusing the eighth, ninth, and eleventh chapters of the epistle to the Romans: and it is surely a strong testimony to the correctness and scriptural character of our seventeenth article to say, that, while it asserts nothing, which is not asserted by saint Paul, it leads the mind directly into the same train of reasoning, which is spontaneously excited by the language of that apostle.

Thus clearly does the article, now brought under discussion, keep within the limitation in

the text, by stating only those points in the doctrine of election, which are revealed; and it is devoutly to be wished, that the children of the church had uniformly followed the example, set them by its fathers, and not endeavored to penetrate into the secret things, which belong to the lord, our God. The legitimate object of studying these sublime mysteries is, as the text intimates, that we may do the words of this law; and, if we studied them with no other end, if we sought in doing so not to condemn our neighbour's errors, but only to make our own calling and election sure, we might under the guidance of the divine spirit search all things, yea, the deep things of God, without fear of entrenching upon those secrets of his government, which he has declared to belong only to himself. Further than this we ought not to aim; and, if we cannot reconcile difficulties or answer objections, but find even the best system envelopped on all sides with intricacies, which we can neither unravel, nor remove, we may rest contented in our ignorance and say with Zophar—‘ It is as high as heaven—what canst thou do?—deeper than hell—what canst thou know ?’

Were indeed the subject of the divine decrees

entirely excluded from our public discourses, there is no reason to apprehend, that theology would thereby be contracted within a narrow compass. While the subjects of the original corruption of our nature through the fall of Adam, of the gracious atonement, made for that and for all our sins by the passion of Christ, of the restoration of our original holiness through his resurrection, of justification or the imputation of his righteousness to believers, of sanctification or the conversion of imputed into inherent holiness, of the temptations from without and from within, from the world, the flesh, and the devil, by which that work is impeded, of the delusions of sin, the necessity of constant prayer, habitual repentance, unfailing perseverance, hourly preparation, while the various plain duties of morality, which issue from these fertile sources, together with all the questions of ecclesiastical unity and sacramental communion, while the hopes and fears, the encouragements and dangers of the christian warfare, and the awful denunciations of a general judgment, remain to us, there is no fear of religion becoming a barren soil. There will be ample room for useful and charitable discussion, ample room for the exercise

of that apostolical duty, earnest contention for the faith, which was once delivered to the saints; nor will there appear any necessity to sound the depths of the divine predestination,

Of providence, foreknowledge, will, and fate,

in order to furnish materials either for private meditation or public discussion. It ought to be considered too in most instances, that, whatever may be the qualifications of the preacher himself, the majority of his audience must be unfit to enter upon such speculations; and he may therefore have occasion, though ever so well prepared to give them instruction, to say to them, as our gracious lord did to his disciples—‘ I have many things to say unto you. But ye cannot bear them now.’

Neither yet should we in dropping this theme of angry contention surrender any of the more essential and vital parts of our religion. ‘ This commandment, which I command thee this day,’ (said Moses in the chapter following my text) ‘ it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldst say—“ Who shall go up for us to heaven and bring it unto us, that we may hear it and do it?” Neither is it

‘ beyond the sea, that thou shouldst say—“ Who
“ shall go over the sea for us and bring it unto us,
“ that we may hear it and do it?” But the word
‘ is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth and in thy
‘ heart, that thou mayest do it.’ Without diving
therefore into the hidden things, which no man
can fathom, and where the understanding is not
so truly lost in admiration as bewildered in amaze-
ment, the things, which are revealed, will furnish
us with sustenance of a more solid and supporting
quality. It is far from being true, that whatever
is difficult of attainment is generally more needful
for us than that, which is within our reach. The
text warns us of the contrary. Nay. It is one
instance of the divine goodness, to place what we
most want nearest to us. Gold and silver are
buried within the earth, while corn grows upon
its surface; and, while the depths of philosophy
often mock the efforts, which are necessary to
detect them, the saving truths of christianity meet
us in every page of scripture, and there he, that
seeketh them, findeth.

As for hidden subjects and matters of doubtful
disputation, a time is coming, when perhaps all
their difficulties will vanish, when he, who first

caused the light to shine out of darkness, will shed the clear light of his truth upon us and remove all mists from our eyes. While we have such a hope in us, we may well be contented to await the arrival of this period in patience. It will then probably be a subject of grief to all the disputants upon this question to reflect, with how small a knowledge of it in themselves they have quarrelled with the ignorance of others. They will see, that their adversaries and themselves were often equally in the dark, that the tenets, which they have spent much labour in refuting, were often their own in disguise, and that, while truth has been far above out of the sight of both the litigating parties, religion has been the chief sufferer by the asperity of their contention.

In the mean time let us amidst our zeal to maintain the righteousness of God remember, that it is not to be wrought by the wrath of man, that we do not go the right way to promote it by anathematizing those, who oppose us, but that the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them, that make peace: for, to use the hallowed words of an apostle, ‘ he, that in these things serveth ‘ Christ, is acceptable to God and approved of

‘men. Let us therefore,’ (continues he in language, which could not more aptly close the argument he had then in hand than it does that, which we have been now pursuing)—‘let us follow after the things, which make for peace, and things, wherewith one may edify another!’

S E R M O N I I I .

Mark xii. 28. 29. 30. 31.

One of the scribes came, and, having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving, that he had answered them well, asked him—‘ Which is the first commandment of all?—: and Jesus answered him. ‘ The first of all the commandments is—“ Hear, O Israel! The lord, our God, is one “ lord; and thou shalt love the lord, thy God, with all “ thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind “ and with all thy strength.” This is the first commandment; and the second is like, namely this. “ Thou shalt “ love thy neighbour, as thyself.” There is none other ‘ commandment, greater than these.’

NO principle of action appears to have sunk so low or to have been so nearly extinguished by the fall as the love of God. During the ages, in which heathen philosophy was the best guide in morality, the various relations of man to man were investigated with extraordinary skill; and, though even in this department important errors were committed, the truths established and the maxims

received were at least more than sufficient to condemn the too general neglect of them in practice. But the duty of man to God, considered, as separate from the former, made no part of the scheme of ethics. In some indeed of his most interesting relations to us, as in those of redeemer and sanctifier, he was unknown to the pagan world; and the absurd rites and filthy services of superstition were beneath the notice of philosophy. But, even as our creator and preserver, under which names he was or might have been known to them, he had not his due honour in any of the systems of heathen morality. His will was never regarded, as a primary and fundamental object of inquiry; and as for the obligation to love him, as our father, it seems not to have been stated at all, and was alike exploded from the world in theory or in practice. In the Jewish history the same principle, though unquestionably better understood, appears scarcely to have been more regarded, if we may judge from the continual remonstrances to that effect, which are contained in all their prophets. ‘The ox
‘ knoweth his owner,’ (saith Isaiah) ‘and the
‘ ass his master’s crib. But Israel doth not know.
‘ My people doth not consider.’ ‘The stork in

‘ the heaven’ (says Jeremiah) ‘ knoweth her appointed times ; and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming. But my people know not the judgment of the lord.’ ‘ For with their mouth’ (says Ezekiel) ‘ they show much love. But their heart goeth after their covetousness.’ Thus also Malachi expostulates with them in the name of the lord of hosts, saying. ‘ A son honoreth his father, and a servant his master. If then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear?’ And lastly our lord himself addresses them in words to the same purpose. ‘ Why call ye me—“ Lord, lord!”—and do not the things, which I say?’ Nor was it the Jews alone, that neglected this great duty. Even now, when it has been more explicitly declared by our saviour himself, and both the extent of its obligations and the means of its accomplishment clearly pointed out, even now, if we would ascertain the amount of love for God, actually existing in the world, let every man’s own conscience answer! Who is there, that can say he loves the lord, his God, with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his mind and with all his strength, with all the facul-

ties in short, that God has given him, or so intensely as not to love himself, his friends, or his pleasures better? Who is there, that can say he would willingly encounter the same degree of odium or opposition in defending the name of God, when blasphemed or taken in vain, or that he would be urged to the task by the same warmth of feeling, which would animate him, if he heard the character of his natural father or of his intimate friend, treated with disrespect? But in fact, without waiting for the answer to these questions, we have in the ordinary mode of estimating characters a sufficient proof, that the love of God is regarded at best, as an inferior and subordinate part of our duty: for who is there, that has not often known the swearer, the drunkard, the libertine, whose vices have not utterly destroyed the benevolence of their character, screened from merited reproach by pleading their goodness of heart or generosity of disposition in opposition to their breach of the laws of God?

The high and primary duty however of loving God is sometimes degraded still lower: for we occasionally hear it defended. Now no man thinks of defending justice or liberality, benevolence, pa-

triotism, or any other of our relative duties. They stand on their own ground and rest their claim to regard and attention upon that intrinsic goodness, which they are all known to possess. The love of God is the only good quality, which appears to require a defender. And upon what principle is this defence grounded? Commonly upon its tendency to promote the love of man, upon its conduciveness to the discharge of our relative duties: which is to deduce the value of a greater good from its fitness to produce a less. The claims of God upon our love and gratitude are both prior in time and superior in magnitude to any duties, which we can owe to our neighbour; and he, who upholds the first by a reference to the second, acts, as though he should defend the angelic nature by its partial resemblance to the human.

Yet this is the commandment, which our saviour plainly declares to be the first and greatest of all. 'The first of all the commandments' (says he) 'is—“Hear, O Israel! The lord, thy God, is one
“lord; and thou shalt love the lord, thy God, with
“all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all
“thy mind and with all thy strength.” He sets it first in order and highest in degree, even above the

love, which he requires from us towards our neighbour, whom we are only taught to love, as we love ourselves, which is a love, that costs us no effort, while we must love God with an exertion of our powers, which we are to raise above themselves to comprehend and to adore him, even with all our heart and with all our soul and with all our mind and with all our strength.

Indeed, when we have considered only for a moment the infinite claims, which he has upon our love, we shall never wonder at this commandment ranking before and above all others. In the first place he created us: and this is an obligation, which we not only cannot repay (for that may be said of all our obligations to him), but which we cannot measure. Of our other debts to his majesty we can form some inadequate conception, because we can compare the communication of his bounty with the loss of it, having felt the want as well as the supply. But the difference between existence and nonexistence we can never appreciate, because one of the terms in the comparison is beyond the reach of experience. Nevertheless, though we cannot measure the extent of this obligation, it is something to know, that it is immeasurable, and

to feel, while thanking our heavenly father for blessings, which we actually enjoy, that there is yet a prior debt of gratitude for having called us out of that original nothing, in which all enjoyment was impossible. The value however of man's creation is still greater, infinitely greater than this. For we were not only called into being (the very brutes, the stones of the field, were so), but into a state and mode of being, which enables us to hold communion with our maker, to contemplate, to adore, to obey, nay, even, what is a still higher privilege than all, to love him. He therefore, who has given us life and preserved it, who has watched over us, while we were negligent of ourselves, in sleep and in weariness, in infancy and in childhood, nay, even in thoughtlessness and in sin, who has enlarged our bodies, till they grew to manhood, and fed our souls with instruction, who has made the world minister to our subsistence and filled it with riches for our accommodation, who, when our offences had turned his good into evil, would not suffer us to perish in the ruin, which we had provoked, but sent his son to take away our sins, to heal our corruptions, and to renew our nature, to whom in short we owe every

thing, that we have, or are, or hope for, has a claim upon all our love and upon all our service; and there is not a right feeling in our hearts, which would not take pleasure in paying him the honour, which is due to his name.

Towards such a being it can never be unreasonable to demand, that all the treasures of our hearts, that all our minds, all our souls, and all our strength should be emptied in returns of love; and we should not only, when we rise, and when we retire, call to mind with thankfulness the wonders, which he has done for us, but study his will in every occupation and even amusement of our lives. It ought to sweeten every labour to think, that he has commanded it; and we have reason to reckon it among our first privileges, that we are allowed to serve and honor a being, so infinitely beyond our thoughts and above our praise.

Still it is but little to say of this duty, that it is incumbent upon us prior to all others, or even, that it ranks above them all. It is little to say of it, that it is an antecedent obligation or a more imperative debt. It ought further to be stated, that all other works are imperfect and will doubtless prove unacceptable without it. However bright

many of them may appear to human observation, they all want that principle, which is necessary to give them vitality, and are in the eye of God, as a body without a soul. How imperfect for example are all efforts even of kindness, which flow from any other motive! They are prompted perhaps by accidental feeling, by ambition, by a regard for character, by a reverence for superiors, by some secondary principle in short, which either centres in self or terminates at farthest in some point, exclusive of those, whom our saviour has commanded us to love, as our enemies, our persecutors, nay, all men. Even diligence in business, perseverance in study, attention to relations, patience under rebuke, and all the humbler duties of common life are more heartily, more cheerfully, and therefore more satisfactorily performed, as under the eye of a benevolent father, who requires our service, and whom we love to serve, than they could be upon any subordinate principle whatever. The most splendid topics of ethical wisdom sink into tameness and insipidity, when compared with the love of God, just as the best faithfulness of a slave falls short of the zealous and cheerful cooperation of a son.

Although therefore we do not defend the love of God upon the ground of its promoting the love of man, we yet maintain, that in its own nature it is most eminently calculated to promote it. The two commandments hang admirably together. He, who has best discharged the first, will be best disposed to perform the second. With these feelings towards God we shall undoubtedly be better qualified to love our neighbour: for it is a part of our duty to God to do so. ‘He, that doth my commandments,’ (said our saviour) ‘he it is, that loveth me:’—and this among others is a commandment, which we have from him, that he, who loveth God, love his brother also. In fact he, who loves God, has new motives for loving his neighbour: for he then looks upon mankind, as fellow creatures, depending upon the same hand, and redeemed by one common saviour. There is thus the same bond to connect him to the whole of his species, which unites members of the same family together; and all the sympathies of nature become generalized in their object. To how little purpose then do we draw out learned disquisitions on the nature and propriety of temperance, justice, patriotism, and other virtues, and thus raise costly

works about particular sluices and subsidiary channels of duty, when it is in our power to let in upon them a rich fountain of living water from above, which will abundantly feed and supply them all?

With respect indeed to the latter of these commandments, there is some disposition to it remaining in us naturally. It is a first impulse within us to love our neighbours, though not to love them, as ourselves, not as brethren, not as children of God. Still there is a natural affection for our kindred. There are ties, that attach us to our friends and companions; and every one, that has a spark of humanity within him, knows experimentally, at least in some measure, what it is to love his neighbour. In regard to this commandment therefore, though we have much still to learn, nevertheless it is not quite so new to us as the other: for men are not only lovers of themselves or of pleasures, but of their neighbours also, more than they are lovers of God.

But yet this natural love of our neighbour is hatred, when compared with that divine love of him, which the scriptures require of us. ‘Love
‘ye your enemies!’—said Christ. ‘Love them,

‘that hate you!’—and again—‘Love thy neighbour, as thyself! Love one another, as I have loved you!’—; and greater love than this can no man bear. Now this, to say the least of it, is a description of love, which is not common. It is something very different from natural affection, which is extremely limited in its objects and confined almost exclusively to our family or our benefactors. It is enlarged and liberal in its nature, and, issuing, as it must needs do to be genuine, from the love of God, borrows its extent and character from that being, who is loving unto every man, and whose mercy is over all his works.

I say it issues from the love of God. There is no other motive, which can supply it. All other motives are circumscribed in their extent, whereas a love, which is universal, must have a cause adequate to its universality; and therefore, before we can love all men, even our enemies, it is necessary, that we should recollect, that even our enemies are beloved by God.

Thus truly is love the fulfilling of the law: for, beginning in love to God, and ending in love to man, it includes all inferior commandments under it: and therefore justly did the scribe say in the

passage, following the text.—‘ Well, master. Thou
‘ hast said the truth. For there is one God, and
‘ there is none other, but he; and to love him with
‘ all the heart and with all the understanding and
‘ with all the soul and with all the strength is
‘ more than all whole burnt offerings and sacri-
‘ fices.’

It may seem unnecessary therefore upon the present occasion to dilate much on the nature of that love for man, which the love of God would dictate. It may appear to be sufficient, that we have pointed out the stock, on which it grows, inasmuch as the produce will necessarily derive its taste and qualities from the nature of the parent tree. In order however to compleat our view of this subject, it must yet be added, that the sincere and hearty love of God will purify as well as promote the love, which we entertain for our neighbour.

For it is not every degree or description of love, that is genuine. The love of some men for their neighbours is such as to injure rather than to benefit them. How many a child has been ruined by the extravagant fondness of his parents, how many a healing truth suppressed through fear of

giving offence, till even the disclosure has lost its power to heal! Charity itself may be mischievous, when bestowed upon a knave, or unjust, if, like the hasty partiality of Isaac, it reserves no blessing for another.

But further, there are instances of love for the creatures of God, which, being contrary to the will of the creator, are consequently incompatible with our love for him. Such probably was the fatal fondness, through which Adam fell, not being deceived. Such would have been the guilty affection of Abraham, had he been led by it to spare the son, whom God commanded him to sacrifice. Such indisputably was the blind attachment of Peter to the person of our blessed saviour, which drew down upon him that severe rebuke—‘Get thee behind me, Satan! Thou art an offence unto me: for thou savorest not the things, that be of God, but those, that be of men.’

Accordingly, when our saviour bade us love one another, as he had loved us, he taught us to abstain from all these errors, and set us a model, the imitation of which will serve, as a guide to us, both to improve and to regulate our affections: for as his love for us on the one hand was superior to our

love for ourselves, inasmuch as few men will do so much for their own salvation as he has done for ours, so also on the other it was inferior to his love of the father; for, though offered to all men, it will yet serve to condemn instead of saving those, who have not the love of God abiding in them.

Analogous to this therefore ought to be the measure and the character of our love also. In competition with our love for God all other affections should die in us. No kind or degree of love for men, which is contrary to that pattern or cannot be traced to that original, is a compliance with our saviour's command. Jesus himself said. 'If
' any man come to me and hate not his father and
' mother and wife and children and brethren and
' sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my
' disciple'—: and before the days of the gospel a love for God, not less than this, was on one occasion especially exacted from his people; for, when the children of Israel had rejected God and worshipped a molten calf, Moses stood in the gate of the camp and said—'Who is on the lord's side?
' Let him come unto me!'—; and all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him; and he said unto them. 'Thus saith the lord, God of

‘ Israel. “ Put every man his sword by his side,
“ and go in and out from gate to gate throughout
“ the camp, and slay every man his brother, and
“ every man his companion, and every man his
“ neighbour !”

While therefore we are thus encompassed with dangers and may either love our neighbour too much or too little, inordinately or insufficiently, we have indeed occasion for the love of God not only to stimulate, but to restrain, not only to exalt, but to purify that love, which we owe to our neighbour. Some love for him indeed we have naturally. But it is such as will never lead us to the love of God. We need not therefore expect, that, commencing with the love of man, we shall thence be enabled to pass upward to the love of God. The source will affect the current. But the current has no reaction upon its source. In short the love of God alone is that pure and perennial well of water within us, whence all true godliness must proceed. We ought to cultivate it, because in itself it is most due and right. We ought to cultivate it, because with regard to ourselves it is most good and joyful. We ought to cultivate it, because in its effects on

others, like the precious ointment of Aaron, it begins at the head of all, but flows down to the whole human race, as it were to the skirts of his clothing.

Nor do we want ample encouragement to cultivate it even in its highest purity: for, however it may provoke the ridicule of some or excite the spleen of others, we are assured by the infallible words of an inspired apostle, that all things work together for good to them, that love God, in this world, and also, that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things, which he hath prepared for them in the next.

We see then both the nature and the necessity of the love of God, a sentiment, which must clearly be cultivated with an earnestness and assiduity, proportioned not only to its own goodness, but to our natural inaptitude to receive it. After all our zeal our love for him must fall infinitely short of his love for us: and therefore too great pains can never be bestowed upon acquiring it; nor can any exhortation be out of season, which urges us to encourage or to promote it. We ought to live upon it, as our ordinary diet, to seek it, as our most necessary physic, to remember it in short

upon our bed, and to think upon it, when we are waking.

But, though there is no occasion, when exhortations to the love of God can be unseasonable, there is none also, on which so much caution is requisite to cherish and improve it, as when we are first dismissed from our parents' care and have the world to begin for ourselves. Particularly in this place there are temptations to let it go as well as helps to preserve it, of which it is so important, that a young man should during his residence among us make a right use, that I shall (I trust) be excused for dwelling a little at large both upon the one and upon the other.

In the first place few persons ever begin their career in this university without finding in their comparative freedom from restraint, in the novelty of the scene, in the attention and obsequiousness of inferiors, and the levity of thoughtless companions, a counteracting influence to those serious reflections, which the importance of the part they have to act both in regard to their worldly prospects and to their eternal hope requires of them. To this seductive influence is added often the

power of ridicule, which is most commonly directed against that, which is serious, the ribaldry of juvenile conversation, together with those violent passions and headstrong appetites, incident to youth; all which, united, will frequently prove more than a match for any principle, short of that love of God, which our saviour enforces in the text, and which is necessary to be exerted at all times with all the heart and with all the soul and with all the mind and with all the strength, but which yet is most eminently necessary under the circumstances I have mentioned, and which, if so exerted, will not only subdue the mischief and defeat the efficacy of these temptations in ourselves, but emanate also in that love for our neighbour, which will stimulate us to adopt active measures in the ardent hope of reclaiming others.

On the other hand to those, who are aware of this danger and seriously desirous of avoiding it, this place holds out advantages of no mean order: and among the chief of these I reckon that regular performance of divine service in chapels, which to those, who have lost the love of God, is wearisome, but to those, who desire to promote and preserve it, an exercise of cheerful affection.

There is nothing more dangerous than to let any ordinance of religion degenerate into mere form. It mortifies a principle within us, which was sluggish and inactive before. But then it depends upon every one's self to give to the ordinance life and substance by paying serious attention to it, and by honestly striving to pray, when prayers are read, in spite of surrounding indifference, with devotion and understanding. The regular performance of divine service, and the ready access to books on divine subjects and to persons capable of explaining them, are means of grace, which cannot be neglected without guilt, but which thousands have found to contribute under divine Providence through a right use of his bounty to the knowledge and love of that being, whom to know and to love is our great business and only glory. A right use of these ordinances will also sanctify our other studies; and thus will each opportunity of improving the faculties, which God has given us, if employed under a sense of duty for his sake, who ordained it, become likewise an opportunity of improving our love of God and showing forth his glory.

But above all, whether here or elsewhere, we

should recollect, that it is not natural for us to think of God, nor consequently to love him, and that therefore it becomes us to pray continually for the illumination and guidance of his holy spirit, who alone can dispose and qualify us truly to love that best of benefactors, whom it is our disposition and nature to forget.

At the same time also, while we daily on our knees and constantly in our hearts pray for that comforter, whose aid we continually want, we must be careful not to defeat our prayers by such acts as might provoke him to deny them. We must be careful therefore chiefly to abstain from youthful lusts, which war against the soul, but yet with no slight exertion of resolution and humility to keep a watch at all times upon all our words and upon all our thoughts, lest the love of ourselves should gradually eat up our love for our neighbour, and the little love, which we still retain for him, be regarded by us, as it is by too many, as a sorry indeed, but still an available apology for neglecting the love of God.

S E R M O N I V.

John xx. 21. 22. 23.

*Then said Jesus to them again—‘Peace be unto you! As
‘my father hath sent me, even so send I you’—: and, when
he had said this, he breathed on them and saith unto them.
‘Receive ye the holy ghost! Whosoever sins ye remit,
‘they are remitted unto them, and, whosoever sins ye re-
‘tain, they are retained.’*

THE closing words of this commission are addressed to every priest of the church of England on his ordination. They have formed the basis of many a conscientious objection and have occasioned the dissent of numbers, while other persons, who, but for that objection, would have been equally desirous and qualified to enter into its ministry, who trusted, that they were inwardly moved by the holy ghost to take upon them that office, and who were devoted to the love of it, have yet been deterred by this passage in the ordination-service from receiving a commission, which

they were calculated to adorn. It may at least therefore serve to allay conscientious scruples and to satisfy reasonable doubts, if not for other valuable purposes, to consider the nature and extent of the commission, which Christ gave in these words to his apostles, as well as the grounds, upon which the repetition and continuance of them is justified in the church of England.

Whatever the nature of that commission was, it was evidently one of no ordinary importance: for it was ushered in by that emphatic declaration—‘As my father hath sent me, even so send I you.’ And this declaration was followed up by an action no less impressive. He breathed on them and saith unto them—‘Receive ye the holy ghost!’—thus giving to the occasion extraordinary solemnity, inasmuch as he, who first breathed into the nostrils of man the breath of life, that he might become a living soul, now breathed upon his apostles that quickening spirit, which was to reanimate a world, dead in trespasses and sins. The same spirit was communicated in both cases. But it was now given in fuller measure and for a nobler purpose: for it was now said to those, who

received it, as it was never said to Adam—‘ Whose-
‘ soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto
‘ them, and whosoever sins ye retain, they are
‘ retained.’

In what sense then had the apostles the power of remitting or retaining sins? Even our blessed saviour gave offence by exercising that right upon earth; and yet now we find it extended to the apostles. Whatever the commission was, we can have no doubt, that they used it rightly. The particulars indeed, in which they exercised it, are nowhere recorded at length, the scriptures being concerned not with the condition of individual members, but with the edification of the body of the church. Nevertheless we find, that saint Peter pronounced of one disciple, that he was still in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity, and saint Paul of several others, that their names were written in the book of life. Saint John also, the beloved disciple, exercised the same office, when he declared of many, who had been members of his church, but had since gone out from it, that they were antichrists; and so doubtless did saint Paul, both when he delivered the incestuous Corinthian to Satan, and when he di-

rected him to be forgiven and comforted and received back into the bosom of the church.

The exercise of it in all these instances seems to assume the form of a judgment. In the last case particularly saint Paul proceeds with the solemnity of a judicial sentence. ‘I verily,’ (says he) ‘as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him, that hath so done this deed, in the name of our lord, Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together and my spirit with the power of our lord, Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the lord, Jesus.’

This power in short seems to have been vested in the apostles, that they might keep together in one the body of Christ’s church by cutting off from it the offending members, and by applying to the consciences of individuals the promises or the threatenings of the gospel. For this purpose it was necessary, that their decision should be furnished with authority, and not liable to be gainsaid by other teachers, who had no apostolic character. Therefore saint Paul often appeals to the

signs of an apostle, which he had wrought among his Corinthian converts, and desires, that he may be accounted of, as a minister of Christ, a steward of the mysteries of God. He did not indeed wish to have dominion over their faith. But he yet claims to be an ambassador for Christ, to whom God had committed by particular election the word of reconciliation, and occasionally speaks with a boldness, suitable to that style and title, as when he says—‘ Though I should boast some-
‘ what more of our authority, which the lord hath
‘ given us for edification and not for your destruc-
‘ tion, I should not be ashamed’—; and again—‘ I
‘ told you before, and foretel you, as if I were pre-
‘ sent, the second time, and, being absent, now I
‘ write to them, which heretofore have sinned, and
‘ to all other, that, if I come again, I will not
‘ spare, since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking
‘ in me.’

There can be no doubt therefore, that a power of this kind, if discreetly used, must have been of great use to the church; for it was imparted to the apostles by Christ for that purpose. Moreover it was guarded in their instance, and must be in all, from dangerous abuse, by the spirit of that de-

claration, by which saint Paul immediately after the passage, last cited, thus limits his own authority. ‘We can do nothing against the truth, but ‘for the truth.’

But a more disputable and indeed a much controverted question yet remains. Does the power, so communicated, yet continue in the church, or did it expire with the apostles?

It may be thought, that it was limited by the particular grant of the holy ghost, which accompanied it, to the apostles; who, not having transfused the miraculous powers, which were consequent upon that grant, cannot have transmitted the authority, to which those powers were appendages.

On the other hand it may be argued, that miraculous gifts were no way connected with the power of binding and loosing, that the former were of temporary, the latter of permanent necessity, and that the gift of the holy ghost, being intended for the regeneration of the whole world, was designed to be perpetual and universal, according to the tenour of that prediction—‘Your sons and your ‘daughters shall prophesy, and upon the servants

‘and upon the handmaids in those days I will
‘pour out my spirit’—, and conformably to the
purport of that other promise of our saviour—
‘Lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end
‘of the world.’

It remains therefore to be determined by these
or other considerations, whether this power of ab-
solution was or was not continued beyond the age
of the apostles. It is contended by our church,
that it continues; and both reason and history
concur in determining, that her decision is but
an echo to the voice of scripture.

In the first place the commission, given to the
apostles in my text, appears to import as much.
‘As my father hath sent me,’ (said our lord and
saviour) ‘even so send I you.’ Now the right,
which he was then exerting under the mission of
his father, was that of transferring the authority,
which he had himself received; and that right
must consequently have passed with the rest.
Their mission was the same with Christ’s; and all
the powers, which are requisite to the complete
discharge of that mission, all the powers, which he
exercised under that mission, and which conse-
quently were not peculiar to him, as God, must

have been devolved to them with it. As he transmitted his authority, so also could they.

Accordingly we find saint Paul in the case of the incestuous person apparently exercising this right of transfer. Speaking to the church, whom he had before desired to judge that case, he says — ‘To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive
‘ also: for, if I forgave any thing, to whom I for-
‘ gave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person
‘ of Christ, lest Satan should get an advantage
‘ of us.’

Nor is it any matter of wonder, except for the graciousness of the divine condescension, that a power, so important, and the exercise of which evidently requires so much spiritual direction, should have survived the days of the apostles. There is no less occasion for it now than there was then. The main object perhaps, for which it was requisite at the beginning, was the satisfaction of weak consciences and the removal of scrupulous doubts, which exist now in as great plenty as ever. It was not like the power of working miracles, which, being wanted chiefly for the conviction of unbelievers, was withholden as soon as christianity had taken root and prospered. It was

needful chiefly for the confirmation of christians in the faith, for the settlement and comfort of believers, and is therefore as necessary at one period of the church as at another; neither would the fact of its continuance probably have been disputed, any more than the perpetuity of the two sacraments is disputed, were not by some strange perversion the authority to remit or to retain supposed to convey a right to use it capriciously. Yet surely it cannot be thought, that the apostles themselves had a right to do so. The almighty said to Jeremiah—‘ See! I have this day set thee
‘ over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root
‘ out and to pull down and to destroy and to throw
‘ down, to build, and to plant.’ But surely he had no power to do all this against the word of the lord. Even the miraculous powers of the apostles were not theirs to trifle with; or saint Paul, who had healed many and restored one to life, would not have left Trophimus at Miletum sick or indulged for a while an unavailing sorrow for the danger of Epaphroditus. There is in fact no authority in the world, which carries with it such a right as that of abusing it; neither is it possible to imagine, that, if any of the apostles, like Judas,

had misused his power and taken upon him to forgive or retain at random, the almighty would have been bound by the iniquity of his servant. The remitting and retaining power must have been always limited by the word of God, just as the condemning and absolving power of a judge is limited by the law of the land. Nevertheless it may be said even of the judges of the land, that whatsoever person they release, is released, and whomsoever they condemn, punished, while yet they have no power to act arbitrarily in their decrees, nor was it ever conceived, that, if they should condemn a person, who was notoriously innocent, or acquit one, who was regularly found guilty, their sentence would be ratified by the king, whose name and authority they bear. But, when the judges pass sentence according to the law, it is decisive; and so was the absolution or retention of the apostles, when conducted according to the word of God.

This restriction being admitted, there is no difficulty in supposing, that the authority, which was plainly communicated to the apostles, should be continued to others after them. Indeed, highly as we may deem of the apostolical character, it was

surely a more surprising act of condescension in the saviour to say to any created being—‘ As my ‘ father hath sent me, even so send I you’—, than to transfer that authority from any one frail mortal to another; for the highest apostle was certainly far more unworthy to be placed on a level with Christ than the humblest christian is with an apostle.

The question therefore becomes simply a question of fact. Did the apostles actually transmit their authority to others, or did it die with them? We find, that they transmitted it. At least they ordained elders in every city and appointed bishops, as Titus for instance, and Timothy, to take care of the churches, which were removed from their own personal superintendence. Nay. They went further than this. They have left particular directions for the choice of others to succeed to the exercise of the sacred functions, when the persons, to whom they had themselves entrusted them, should be removed; and we have still preserved to us a catalogue of bishops, who presided over the see of Rome in regular succession from the apostles. The same care was doubtless taken in other churches also; and there is abundant testimony in the writings of early fathers, that there was a regu-

lar succession of bishops in all the churches of God. The letters, dictated by our lord himself in the apocalypse to the seven churches in Asia, are addressed to their angels, which is a term, applied in all parts of scripture to those, who bear a divine commission; and it is clearly unreasonable to suppose, that they had a commission without power, or that the apostles, who placed them there, left with any of them the mere empty name or garbled authority of bishops. They imparted to them doubtless the whole authority, which they had themselves received, that in every church there might be men, duly commissioned and qualified to superintend the flock of Christ, over which the holy ghost had made them overseers: for who can doubt, that to those persons, to whom they consigned, to each in his respective sphere, the task of governing the church of Christ, they bequeathed also the power, which Christ himself had judged to be requisite for discharging that task effectually, the power of binding and loosing? Therefore it was, that saint Paul said to Titus—‘Speak and exhort and rebuke with all authority! Let no man despise thee!’ The

whole priesthood was one order, of which the bishop was chief; and all, having been called and ordained to that office by the apostles themselves or their successors, must have partaken in their proper measure of an authority, which was equally necessary for all. They all derived it from the apostles themselves or from those, whom they deputed to succeed them; and it was communicated in like manner to others. There is no reason to suppose, that the chain has ever been interrupted. But even the priests of the church of England at the present day derive their authority through various hands in regular succession from the apostles; and the authority of binding and loosing, of retaining and remitting is by consequence equally entailed upon all.

It appears then, that our blessed lord and saviour has seen fit to invest all his ministers with the awful responsibility of judges, and that, in order to secure them respect and excite their vigilance in the execution of that arduous office, he has instituted a channel, through which they shall in all ages of the church receive an au-

thority, which, like the flame on the Jewish altar, originally came down from heaven. It is their duty to acquaint themselves accurately with the whole law of God, that they may be able to apply its censures and its comforts judiciously, that they may be able to exhort with confidence, to instruct with faithfulness, and to reprove with discretion, that they may with a due measure of mildness and severity heal the wounded spirit, alarm the unawakened sinner, and pronounce to every doubting and returning soul, whether his sins are forgiven or retained in heaven.

Were this truth generally acknowledged, a more serious sense of the sacredness of divine institutions would prevail amongst us, and we should neither on the one hand have so many persons acting under no orders or insufficient orders, nor on the other should we see many applying for episcopal ordination without either love of the truth or knowledge of the gospel. It would be approached with greater reverence and entered upon with more preparation, when the duty of binding and loosing, of forgiving and retaining according to the circumstances and condition of the sinner, were seriously

believed to be conveyed by it, than when no such responsible obligations were thought of. Who would choose, even if he had the option, to sit on the bench of justice or preside in the court of chancery, if he was not competently acquainted with the law? So too, if men recollected the awful consequences, when the people perish for lack of knowledge, when their wounds are healed slightly, and peace is said to them, although, alas! there is no peace, they would be less inclined to offer themselves for the work of the christian ministry, before they had made themselves competently acquainted with the whole of the christian system.

The serious responsibility, which thus attaches to the ministerial character, is well calculated both to increase the awe, which is essentially due to that most sacred function, and also to condemn the rash, the heedless, the profane intrusion into it. He, who comes to it, ought according to the expectations of our church to be inwardly moved by the holy ghost to take upon him that office and ministration, that he may serve God for the promoting of his glory and the edifying of his people. But he ought also to be outwardly called by men,

by those men in particular, who have public authority given them in the congregation to call men to the vineyard of the lord, from those in short, whose authority, being ultimately derived from Christ himself, may be resolved into that, with which Christ himself was furnished for his high office, when he was sent from heaven by the father. No man taketh this honour to himself, but he, that is called of God, as was Aaron; and even Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest, but was himself sent, as he sent others, and by limiting the transmission of that authority to a certain line has virtually excluded all others from a share in it. Whatever may be thought of other parts of the pastoral office, none can imagine, that a self-constituted authority can confer the right of forgiving and retaining sins; and, if that power therefore exists in the church at all, it can only reside—it has never been thought to reside, except in those hands, which have received it through successive transmissions from the great shepherd and bishop of souls; for we cannot extend the declaration, which he himself has limited—‘He, that receiveth whomsoever I send, receiveth me.’

The operations of God indeed are unfettered by this or any limitation. The laws of nature restrict not him. He suspends or abrogates or counteracts them at his pleasure; nor can any one say unto him—‘What doest thou?’—: and doubtless his ways in the dispensations of grace are as free as in those of providence. There is nothing to hinder him from sending his messages by what instruments or through what channels he pleases. Our actions are restrained by his laws, but not his, who out of lifeless stones may, if he will, raise up children unto Abraham, and who once bade even the dumb ass reprove the madness of his prophet: and we humbly acknowledge, that he has at various times departed from the course, which he himself had established, accepting the persons of those, who were not set apart according to the established order of his sanctuary, and making known his will by messengers, who had not received their commission in the precise way of his appointment. There have been many in the christian church, who, like Amos in the Jewish, were no prophets, nor sons of prophets, when God took them and said unto them—‘Go! Prophesy unto my people, ‘Israel!’ We cannot but acknowledge this, when

we witness the gracious effects, with which it has often pleased God to bless a ministry, so defective, when we perceive, that whole churches, which had entirely broken through the line of apostolic ordination, were mainly instrumental some centuries ago to the great work of the reformation from popery and remain still eminent for the christian piety and holiness of many of their members, when we see the conversions, that are even now made and making by ministers, who claim nothing from the apostles, except the example of their faith and the direction of their precepts: nor can we suppose, that the conversions, the fruits of holiness, the labour of love, the faith and hope and charity, which are produced through such ministrations, are vitiated by any defect of form in the ordination of those, who produced them. If charity, which is the end of the commandment, be wrought in us by any means, God will accept the end, however attained, without regarding the imperfection of the means, which have led to it, though the means of his own appointment are doubtless the best and wisest and the most fitted in their nature to promote it. Indeed it seems to have been the design

of our blessed saviour to teach us this truth, when he said to some of his disciples, who had forbidden a man to cast out devils, because he followed not with them—‘Forbid him not! For
‘there is no man, which shall do a miracle in
‘my name, that can lightly speak evil of me:
‘for he, that is not against us, is on our part.’ Nor do we want other evidences to convince us of it. God had confined by an express decree the levitical high priesthood to the family of Aaron: and yet, when that line was broken, when even daring outrages were committed upon the sanctity of his appointment, he revered his own institution, though in improper hands. He prophesied by Caiaphas and allowed his law to be still sacred, though in the person of Ananias: and even before that time, when the ten tribes had flagrantly broken off their connexion with the tribe of Levi and abandoned the temple of Jerusalem, he yet maintained a connexion with them in their separate state, and sent them prophets, after they had renounced his priests.

But, though the almighty has always had abundant occasion given him to connive at irregulari-

ties in his church, this connivance neither alters their character, nor justifies their continuance. Though he is not tied to the observance of his own enactments, we are, and we can no more dispense with them than we can change the laws of the universe. There may be cases, where they do not apply and were not intended to operate, just as the laws of property may be violated to save life, and the calls of mercy may supersede the institutions of sacrifice. But yet, though a neglect of a divine appointment, arising from ignorance or misguided conscience, may not be imputed, as sin, the presumptuous and wilful violation of it assuredly will. To him, who knoweth to do right and doeth it not, to him it is sin. Uzzah meant to support the ark, when he touched it. But, because he knew the care of it to belong to other hands, although he saw it tottering and believed it to be in danger, the lord, who had before allowed even the idolatrous Philistines to remove it, unpunished, yet visited his presumption with death.

God hath set some in the christian church as clearly as he did in the Jewish; and they are first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers;

and although the business, for which he has set them there, is for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, yet the end of their vocation is, that we may all come, not in various ways and through different channels, but in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ, in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the lord. The aim of the christian church is unity. Schism is represented in scripture, as an evil of no ordinary magnitude. It is portrayed in the flagrant colours of tearing the body and dividing the members of Christ, of putting division in the place of unity, and making shipwreck of the faith of the gospel. Union among christians is described in the last prayer of our saviour, not only as a test of their faithfulness, but as the great means also for the conversion of the world. ‘ I pray’ (says he) ‘ not for these, my apostles, alone, but for them ‘ also, which shall believe on me through their ‘ word, that they all may be one, as thou, father, ‘ art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be

‘one in us, that the world may believe, that thou hast sent me.’ And then he represents the heavenly powers, with which he had furnished his apostles, as given them for the same purpose, in these words—‘The glory, which thou gavest me, I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one, I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know, that thou hast sent me.’

Under these circumstances I cannot but consider the preservation of an order of men, who derive their authority through an unbroken series of connecting links from himself, as an argument for its divine original. He, in whose hands are the issues of life, and who disposes the affairs of the world, has permitted the line of his priesthood to survive the wreck of all things else, ecclesiastical, civil, or political. The empire, which swayed the world in the time of our saviour, is broken in pieces. The seven churches, to whom the apocalyptic epistles were written, have dwindled away. The power even of the pope, which for many centuries was too strong to be shaken, is abolished. The eastern and the western churches are no

longer what they were. But the line of the christian priesthood remains through all these changes, unbroken and unimpaired. The shifting events have themselves contributed to preserve it; and even the antichristian dominion of popery has been instrumental to the continuation of a line of ministers, which has survived it.

Now whoever will reflect, that the duration of this undying priesthood has been already eighteen centuries, a period, exceeding that of the levitical priesthood, which it superseded, whoever will recollect, that this line of christian ministers has been preserved more sacred and free from interruption than the other, though that too was plainly instituted by God, whoever will farther consider, that, except the separation of the Jewish people in their dispersion, no other earthly institution has ever subsisted so long, will be inclined to ascribe its preservation to no other cause than the special interposition of him, whose power is in all the earth, and whose providence assigns to all things living their date and existence.

And for what purpose was this wonderful preservation effected? It would be presumptuous to answer that question dogmatically. But doubtless

the last prayer of our saviour will yet be heard, and the world at large will believe, that the father hath sent him. Whenever that blessed consummation arrives, it will be found mainly attributable under Providence to that union among believers, which has been so ardently and doubtless so effectually prayed for: and what is there, that furnishes a brighter hope of that union than the existence of a ministry, possessing an exclusive claim to an authority, which has been delegated to them from Christ and his apostles? This may hereafter form a rallying point to the dispersed christians of every denomination. To this they may submit, under this they may unite more easily than under any other; and, when once they are brought to acknowledge, that they are really the ministers of Christ's appointment, that he has sent them, as he was sent, and clothed them and them only with the power to remit and retain according to the truth of the gospel the offences of his people, when finding this, they find also, that their doctrines are pure, and their sacraments christian, it is to be hoped, that this event, distant as it may at first seem, may yet come and come speedily.

There are (it is ardently hoped) in the present times some signs of a disposition to union among christians. Prejudices are abating on all sides; the strong antipathies and animosities of former ages are wearing away; and a common faith is felt, as a link among believers, which wants only a central point to compleat their junction. Such a point is presented in the church of England. Such a point is presented, wherever there is an apostolic ministry, dispensing christian sacraments, and preaching the truths of the gospel. May the almighty grant, that henceforth the whole body of his church may be fitly joined together, and, being compacted with that, which every joint supplieth according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ, and make increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love!

With a view to hasten this time, it is desirable, that these principles should be upholden with plainness and sincerity in dependence on him, from whose appointment they are derived, that both the ministers themselves, and the people, over whom the holy ghost hath made them over-

seers, may alike be taught to reverence the sacred functions, that vigilance on the one side may ensure respect on the other, till the exercise of ministerial absolution shall recover its lost dignity, and the priestly character, being assumed in all its integrity, be blessed with an increase more nearly resembling that, which attended the preaching of the apostles.

So may we be instrumental to the recovery of those, who are not of our fold, till finally there shall be one fold and one shepherd, till the whole world shall at length range itself into that universal church, against which Christ himself has promised, that the gates of hell shall not prevail.

S E R M O N V.

Romans iii. 28.

Therefore we conclude, that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.

IT is with some persons a matter of doubt, whether by the deeds of the law saint Paul meant in this passage the deeds of the moral law or the deeds of the ceremonial law or either of them, exclusive of the other; and, as this is a question of high moment, affecting the whole course of the apostle's argument, and of vital consequence to the integrity of christian doctrine, it may not be unprofitable to examine it here. I propose therefore in the first place to offer some considerations by way of proof, that saint Paul meant the whole law, moral as well as ceremonial, and that at all events he did not intend to exclude the former, secondly to explain the nature of the doctrine, thus stated, and lastly to vindicate it from

objections. The result of the whole will (I hope) be in some poor measure to point out the true ways of man to God,

And justify the ways of God to man.

First then it may be observed of the words under discussion, that they are introduced, as a conclusion from premises, before admitted. ‘Therefore we conclude, that a man is justified ‘by faith without the deeds of the law.’ Consequently the meaning both of faith and of the deeds of the law must be sought from the previous parts of the argument, and the same sense must be put upon the words here as there, since otherwise no conclusion could be established. What then are the deeds (we have first to ask), which have been mentioned in the earlier part of the epistle? Are they such as relate to the moral law of human nature or to the ceremonial law of Moses? Saint Paul has himself declared the object he had in view in the whole preceding part of his epistle by summing it up in this manner. ‘We ‘have before proved both Jews and gentiles, that ‘they are all under sin.’ And how had he proved it? His argument was constructed as follows.

First of the gentiles he had given this description — ‘ When they knew God, they glorified him not, ‘ as God, neither were thankful, but became vain ‘ in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was ‘ darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they ‘ became fools, and changed the glory of the in- ‘ corruptible God into an image, made like to cor- ‘ ruptible man and to birds and fourfooted beasts ‘ and creeping things: wherefore God also gave ‘ them up to uncleanness through the lusts of ‘ their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies ‘ between themselves, who changed the truth of ‘ God into a lie and worshipped and served the ‘ creature more than the creator, who is blessed ‘ for ever. Amen! For this cause God gave them ‘ up unto vile affections: and, even as they did not ‘ like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave ‘ them over to a reprobate mind, to do those ‘ things, which are not convenient, being filled ‘ with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, ‘ covetousness, maliciousness, full of envy, murder, ‘ debate, deceit, malignity, whisperers, backbiters, ‘ haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, in- ‘ ventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, ‘ without understanding, covenant-breakers, with-

‘out natural affection, implacable, unmerciful;
‘who, knowing the judgment of God, that they,
‘which commit such things, are worthy of death,
‘not only do the same, but have pleasure in
‘them, that do them.’ After this description of
the gentiles he had then turned his address to the
Jews. ‘Behold!’—he had said. ‘Thou art called
‘a Jew and retest in the law and makest thy
‘boast of God and knowest his will and approvest
‘the things, that are more excellent, being in-
‘structed out of the law, and art confident, that
‘thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of
‘them, which are in darkness, an instructor of
‘the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the
‘form of knowledge and of the truth in the law.
‘Thou therefore, which teachest another, teachest
‘thou not thyself? Thou, that preachest a man
‘should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou, that
‘sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost
‘thou commit adultery? Thou, that abhorrest
‘idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? Thou, that
‘makest thy boast of the law, through breaking
‘the law dishonorest thou God? For the name of
‘God is blasphemed among the gentiles through
‘you.’ Then from the two descriptions, taken

together, he draws the inference, which I have before quoted, and strengthens it by a series of citations from the Jewish scriptures thus. ‘We
‘ have before proved’ (says he) ‘both Jews and
‘ gentiles, that they are all under sin, as it is
‘ written—“ There is none righteous, no, not one.
“ There is none, that understandeth. There is
“ none, that seeketh after God. They are all gone
“ out of the way. They are together become un-
“ profitable. There is none, that doeth good, no,
“ not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre.
“ With their tongues they have used deceit. The
“ poison of asps is under their lips; whose mouth
“ is full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are
“ swift to shed blood. Destruction and misery
“ are in their ways; and the way of peace have
“ they not known. There is no fear of God before
“ their eyes.” Now we know, that, what things
‘ soever the law saith, it saith to them, who are
‘ under the law, that every mouth may be stopped,
‘ and all the world may become guilty before
‘ God.’ Throughout these repeated descriptions
which are carried to a still greater length than I
have quoted, there is no single example, taken from
any of the requisitions of the ceremonial law, a

circumstance, which is the more remarkable, because there can be no doubt, that any violation even of them in a Jew would have been sinful and would therefore so far go to strengthen the apostle's argument, although in comparison with those grosser transgressions, to which he has alluded, they did not appear to him worthy of being particularly specified. His allusions are rather to such crimes as murder, adultery, deceit, sacrilege, uncleanness, idolatry: and it is from offences of this sort against the holy law of God, that he draws that damning inference—‘ Therefore by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight.’

It may be alleged perhaps, that by speaking of those, who are under the law, in opposition to those, who are without law, saint Paul has put his own meaning upon the expression, and shown, that by the law he meant the law of Moses: and certainly that was his meaning. But the law of Moses was moral as well as ceremonial; and of the two parts of it, that certainly cannot be excluded from the apostle's view, from which all his examples are taken. He must therefore have meant, nay, he must have chiefly meant the moral

law in the whole of this discussion, the moral law, written on tables of stone, even the ten commandments, prescribing our duty to God and to our neighbour; and it must be with reference to them, that he says—‘ Therefore by the deeds of the law ‘ there shall no flesh be justified in his sight.’ And why? ‘ Because by the law is the knowledge ‘ of sin.’ Had we kept the law indeed, had we observed it in all its purity, and never trespassed against its righteous enactments, it would have justified us: for it was in the nature of a covenant; and we, having fulfilled our part of the agreement, might have pleaded it in the judgment, as a ground of acquittal, and laid claim to the blessings of obedience. But now we have all broken it. One and all of us must plead guilty to this charge: and the only difference between Jews and gentiles is, that the one have sinned in the law, and the other have sinned without law. The Jews have sinned; and, being instructed out of the law, they knew it. The gentiles have sinned also, but in actual, though, as saint Paul argues, in wilful and guilty ignorance of it. In fact says he—‘ There is no difference: for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God: and

‘therefore’—by an inference the most logical and conclusive—‘by the deeds of the law, of the whole law of God, however described or distinguished, there shall no flesh be justified in his sight.’

Having thus settled, what was meant by the latter expression in the text, and seen, what are those deeds of the law, by which a man is not justified in the sight of God, we have next to inquire, what is that faith, by which he is justified: and on this point saint Paul himself asks—‘What saith the scripture? Abraham believed God; and it was counted unto him for righteousness.’ It consists therefore of believing God in his promises of mercy: and this is consonant to the whole tenour of our saviour’s ministry, who seldom or never amidst all the gracious miracles, that he wrought, performed any one without first asking the object of it—‘Believest thou, that I am able to do this?’—and, when he had professed his belief of it, he added—‘According to thy faith be it unto thee!’—or else—‘Thy faith hath saved thee. Go in peace!’ Precisely similar to this was the case of Abraham, cited by the apostle. When the almighty without any reference to the deeds of the patriarch had simply promised him,

that in his seed all families of the earth should be blessed, he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully persuaded, that what he had promised he was able also to perform: and therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness. ‘Now it was not written’ (says saint Paul) ‘for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him, but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him, that raised up Jesus, our lord, from the dead.’ This then is the faith, by which we are to be justified, a reliance upon the promise, a simple dependence upon the word of God without any reference to our own works or deservings. It is indeed to be preceded by confession. It is to be followed by sanctification. But still the justifying act is faith, which is freely given us by the grace of God, unearned and often unsought (for without faith how can we seek it?): and therefore, as our justification, if it had been effected by our own works, by our obedience to the law of God, would have been properly the righteousness of man and would have given us something, whereof to glory, the justification by faith is called the righteousness of

God, it being his free gift, made necessary to us by our own unrighteousness; and by it all boasting is excluded. ‘ This righteousness of God therefore’ (says saint Paul) ‘ without the law,’ entirely independent of its requisitions, which we have broken, of its blessings, which we have forfeited, and of its curses, which are remitted to us, ‘ this righteousness of God without the law is now manifested to the world by the apostles, being moreover witnessed by the law, which points in all its ablutions and sacrifices to the pardon, obtained by the death of Jesus, and by the prophets, who with one voice attested the same truth, even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them, that believe: for, if justified at all, we must be justified freely by his grace through the redemption, that is in Christ Jesus.’ This is the doctrine of saint Paul upon this most important of all subjects; and hence it is, that he feels himself authorized to conclude, that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.

Such being the meaning of the terms in the text, we might now proceed to explain more at

large the nature of the doctrine, contained in them, but that I feel it necessary in the very outset to guard against a misinterpretation, to which otherwise the remarkable force of this expression might render it liable. It may possibly seem, that saint Paul in saying, that a man is justified without the deeds of the law, virtually declares the deeds, prescribed by the law, unnecessary, and the moral law itself repealed. To reply to such a perversion of saint Paul's words, which is opposed and confuted by the whole colour of the apostle's life and writings, may indeed by some be deemed unnecessary. But, that the words are really in some measure open to this perversion, appears from saint Paul's having himself anticipated the objection by exclaiming after he had stated the whole doctrine—'What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?' But he instantly represses the impious thought with that emphatical denial—'God forbid!' The fact is, as it is stated in the homily on this very subject, that saint Paul does not exclude the deeds of the law from the number of christian duties or deny their obligation on our practice. He excludes them only from the office of justifying;

which is not the only office, requisite to our salvation. We are justified indeed by faith and are thus privileged to approach our maker. But none can approach, except for the purpose of serving him; and for that purpose the deeds of the law are necessary. Accordingly, in order that we may be duly qualified for performing them, the holy spirit is sent into our hearts, to begin in us the work of sanctification, that work, which is emphatically denominated the life of God in the soul, and of which justification is the beginning or birth, but which will not attain its full growth and final perfection, till the justified christian, having finished the toils and put off the infirmities of mortality, is made perfect in the love of God and glorified with his redeemer.

To dwell longer on this part of our subject would lead us away from our present object: and yet it is probably owing to this misconstruction of the apostle's doctrine, that some persons are eager to confine the law, spoken of in the text, to the ceremonial law only, and thus unintentionally, but in effect, to strip the grace of God in the salvation of man of its greatest beauty. It becomes desirable therefore to explain more at large the

nature of a doctrine, which saint Paul lays down, as the basis of his whole epistle, and which having proved in the three first chapters, he continually alludes to in all, that follow, nay, which he seems most intent to illustrate, to confirm, and to preserve in all his other epistles, and which has been truly represented in conformity with that great apostle's reasonings and practice, as the criterion of a standing or a falling church, a doctrine too, which our own church has most unequivocally maintained, saying in her eleventh article—‘ That
‘ we are justified by faith only, is a most whole-
‘ some doctrine and very full of comfort.’

When man was first created, God gave him a law for his guide and said to him—‘ This do!
‘ and thou shalt live.’ But unhappily the first man broke this law; and in consequence death passed upon him and his posterity, as they had deserved. Death passed upon all men, as saint Paul says, for that all have sinned. We have all broken the law; and therefore all are sentenced to die. Here then as to all its saving purpose terminated the covenant of works; and it was necessary, that either in this condition the whole race of mankind should have been left without

hope or chance of deliverance, or that some milder covenant than that of works should be found for them. The commandment, which Adam, when perfect, had broken, it was not to be expected, that Adam, the transgressor, should observe; and thus the law, which was ordained unto life, was found to be unto death. Accordingly, when the terms of the new covenant were promulgated, it was no longer couched in the old terms—‘This do! and thou shalt live’—but ran in a strain, better adapted to our fallen condition—‘Believe! and thou shalt be saved.’ And this is an appointment, most wisely constructed to heal the breaches, which our nature has sustained: for as it was by disbelieving the divine word—‘Thou shalt surely die’—, that man was first tempted to sin, it was most congruous and suitable, that by faith he should be restored. Because of unbelief they were broken off; and thou standest by faith.

But, before faith could be ordained, as the appointed means for man’s salvation, an object was necessary to be found, in whom our belief might have a saving efficacy: and it was for this purpose, that Jesus Christ came into the world.

He is the only being, who ever perfectly fulfilled that law, which we have violated and are hourly violating. He not only fulfilled the law, but endured the penalty: and he, who was at liberty to prescribe what conditions he chose for a benefit, which he alone could confer, has been graciously pleased to declare, that whoever believes in his atonement shall have the full benefit of his salvation. As by birth we are children of Adam and liable, as we too well know and feel, to all the consequences of his transgression, so by faith we are children of God and entitled through the mercies of Christ to all the blessings of his redemption: for it is written—‘As many
‘as received him, to them gave he power to
‘become the sons of God, even to them, that
‘believe on his name.’

Now, whatever may be thought of this new condition of our salvation (for we are told, that it was to the Jews a stumblingblock and to the Greeks foolishness), it is evident, that no stricter conditions could have stood us in any service. Had we been required to keep the law for our justification, we must have kept the whole: for —‘He,’ (says saint James) ‘that offendeth in one

‘point, is guilty of all.’ He as essentially, though not as grossly violates the integrity of the law and affronts the majesty of the lawgiver in transgressing any one enactment as if he had broken every commandment in the decalogue. And what is that law, which we should then be required to keep wholly and entirely without blot or failure? It is summed up by our blessed saviour in these two particulars, to love God with all our heart, and to love our neighbour, as ourselves. If any one is willing to put his justification upon this test, to make the salvation of his soul dependent upon his compliance with this condition, then indeed, so far as he is concerned, Christ is dead in vain. He had no occasion for his death. He has none for his justification. He is his own saviour; and he has done, what the scriptures declare, that no man ever yet did. He has quickened his own soul.

There are indeed some persons, who steer a middle course, and, not pretending, as we can scarcely think any one would pretend, to a fulfilment of the whole law, yet dream of a mitigated law through the redemption of Christ, whose milder decrees under the influence of di-

vine grace they think themselves competent to fulfil. But where do we find in scripture any allusion to this mitigated law? The law is there said to be holy and just and good. It is declared to be pure, right, clean, perfect, and righteous; nor is there from one end of that volume to the other any intimation of the least flexibility in the rigour of its obligations or any mitigation of its severest enactments. It is unbending in strictness, fearful in holiness, incapable of relaxation or repeal. Christ indeed has deprived it of its terrors by having fulfilled its exactions and satisfied its utmost demands. But he has not altered its nature. He has not impaired its obligations. There it remains, as it was before, unchanged and unchangeable, founded in immutable righteousness, emanating from the essential nature of deity, and, like its author, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Nay. So far were the apostles from regarding the law, as altered or impaired, shorn of its beams or lowered in its demands, in consequence of our saviour's death, that they represent it, as the same dread enemy as before, not conquered, not brought to terms, but set in eternal opposition to the grace of the gospel,

whereby we are only sheltered from its curse, while we are under training to answer its holy requisitions. ‘Christ,’ (said saint Paul to the Galatians) ‘Christ is become of no effect unto ‘you, whosoever of you are justified by the law. ‘Ye are fallen from grace.’ No. The sacred law remains inviolably the same; and we are justified by grace. We lay no claim to justification by virtue of our compliance with any of its demands, mitigated or unmitigated. But ‘we ‘through the spirit,’ to use the inspired words of the apostle, ‘wait for the hope of righteousness ‘or justification by faith.’

If therefore we are justified at all, we must be justified entirely, as saint Paul tells us, without the deeds of the law. Enough has been said, surely enough must be felt in every one’s own bosom and conscience, to convince us, that the law is so far from justifying, that it will serve only to condemn us. Whoever has infringed it, though in the minutest particular, if there be any truth in the word of God, stands accursed by it: for it is written—‘Cursed is every one, ‘that continueth not in all things, which are ‘written in the book of the law, to do them.’

The only comfort, which we have now in looking upon the law, is, that Christ hath redeemed us from its curse, being made a curse for us, and that, blotting out the handwriting of ordinances, that was against us, which was contrary to us, he hath taken it out of the way, nailing it to his cross. We cannot look to it in hope of being saved by it: for, if we do, we fall from grace. In short, we cannot take both for the ground of our confidence, the deeds of the law and the grace of the gospel. Saint Paul has set them in irreconcilable opposition to each other, saying—‘ If by grace, then is it no more of works. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace’—: and, if we must needs choose, by which of the two we will be justified, surely we are right in closing with saint Paul—‘ A man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.’

It remains therefore in further illustration of this passage, having disposed of the negative part of the text by showing, that the deeds of the law are no way conducive to our justification, to unfold the genuine meaning of the positive declaration—‘ A man is justified by faith’—: and

this meaning must of course be determined by the force of the terms composing it. What is meant by faith, has been already in some degree stated and will farther appear hereafter. Let us now inquire, what is designed by the phrase, justified! The word, justification, in saint Paul's use of it, is not to be so understood, as though it were coextensive with salvation: for the whole strain of his writings forbids us to suppose, that he would ever have said—'A man is saved without the deeds of the law.' Nay. He himself teaches, that without holiness no man shall see the lord; and holiness is to the deeds of the law, as a whole is to its component parts. But yet he said—'A man is justified without the deeds of the law'—: and what he here meant by being justified he himself explains afterwards in the fifth chapter, where he uses the same phrase, as at the same time synonymous with being reconciled, and opposite to being saved. 'While we were yet sinners,' (says he) 'Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him: for if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his son,

‘ much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved
‘ by his life.’ Being justified therefore is so far
from constituting the whole of our salvation,
that, after we have been justified, it still be-
comes a question, whether we shall be saved,
though that question is here in the confidence
of hope triumphantly answered in the affirma-
tive. But to be justified (it seems) is to be
reconciled. As sinners, as transgressors of the
moral law, we were enemies to God, hating him
for having enacted a law, which we had broken,
and exposed to his hatred for having broken it.
But no sooner do we believe in the efficacy of
his son’s blood, no sooner do we believe, that
Christ died for us, the just for the unjust, than
he is reconciled to us, and we are justified, not
indeed made just, but for the sake of Christ’s
righteousness accounted such; and he, who is
of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, will yet
look on the object of our faith and pass by the
imperfections of the believer. It will be with
us, as it was with those, to whom Christ said,
while on earth—‘ Thy sins are forgiven thee.
‘ Go in peace!’—and again.—‘ Go thy way ! Sin
‘ no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee!’—:

and the advantage, which we have now gained, is thus stated and limited by saint Paul himself in conformity with those gracious declarations—
‘Being justified by faith, we have peace with
‘God.’ ‘For the work of righteousness’ (said Isaiah) ‘shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.’

You see then, brethren, that it is not contended, that faith alone saves, though faith alone begins our salvation. But it is contended, that faith alone justifies, that faith alone gives to the sinner’s conscience that peace of God, which, as it passes all understanding, must be felt, before it can be appreciated. Look to any other quarter! Look to the law, which we have violated, or the God, whom we have offended! and you see traces of enmity, which destroy our peace and make us regard our maker, all pure and holy as he is, with dread, with horror, and almost with hatred. But look on the death of Jesus, that death, which was suffered for our redemption! and you behold in it an authentic proof, that God is reconciled, that he is willing to receive us into favour, and stretches out the arms of his mercy to meet his penitent, returning sin-

ners. Some such belief as this is necessary in order to approach him in prayer. Without it we could have no heart to serve him; and he, who admits most fully the saving doctrine of reconciliation by faith only, will have most peace in approaching, most heart to serve him, most thankfulness for a mercy as great as it is unmerited.

Here then he may begin what saint Paul emphatically denominates the life of faith. He will not feel, that he has already attained, either is already perfect. He is but a babe at present. But, though a babe, he is a babe in Christ, and consequently a new creature. He comes to his maker with new feelings; for he was at enmity, and he is at peace with him—in a new relation; for he was a stranger to him and has become his son. How then shall he not come with new dispositions to serve and obey him, who loved him, when he was his enemy, and died for him, while he was a sinner? In fact he must come with better and purer zeal for the honour of his redeemer than he could ever have brought to the demands of the law, inasmuch as a redeemer is a dearer title than a judge, and a reconciled than an offended God.

There is however one consideration more, before our view of the subject of justification by faith is compleated. There is no merit in faith. It does not deserve our pardon. Otherwise it would be one of those deeds of the law, which are here expressly excluded. It is indeed the instrument or immediate cause of our justification. But the original and only meritorious cause of it is the satisfaction, made for our sins by Christ Jesus. We are justified by our faith, but not for it. That faith was given us as much as our wit, our wisdom, our strength, or any other faculty is given us; and we are justified only for the sake of him, who has graciously been pleased to accept the persons of all, who believe in him. To disbelieve him, as the dumbness of Zacharias may testify³, is the greatest insult, which can be put upon his goodness. The lowest acknowledgment, which we can make for all his mercy, is to believe and to accept it; and he requires no more. If we will take him, as our saviour, he is willing to save us. If we will believe, that he has saved us, he is reconciled to us at once.

But, though there is no merit in faith, there

is a remarkable fitness in it for the purpose, which it was appointed to answer. The chief impediment to the general reception of this doctrine, is, that men are not aware they are so far gone from righteousness as to require such a saviour. They still dream of doing something for their own recovery; and, so long as they are persuaded they can do this, they will neither accept the work of another, nor believe in the remedy, which has been provided. What they do not think they want, they will not condescend to receive. They cannot think the whole work is to be performed for them; and, though they would gladly do some great thing in order to recover themselves, they cannot submit to the simple precept—‘Wash, and be clean!’ But when men have unlearned this prejudice, when they know, how little it is they can do of themselves, they will then seek for a saviour; and, coming to him in this disposition, they come to him with love, with simple dependence upon his will, and, their souls being purified by faith from the pride, the selfwill, and the carnal security, which before withheld them from the redeemer, they are prepared in heart and mind to run the race,

which a being of such mercy has set before them.

Still it would be wrong perhaps to dismiss this subject altogether without adverting to the apparent contradiction in terms between saint Paul and saint James. Saint Paul says—‘A man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law’—, saint James—‘By works a man is justified and not by faith only’—: and, what is still more remarkable, they both appeal to the very same fact in confirmation of their apparently opposite assertions. Saint Paul says—‘By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac, accounting, that God was able to raise him up even from the dead’—: and saint James on the same fact asks—‘Was not Abraham, our father, justified by works, when he had offered Isaac, his son, upon the altar?’ But he then adds a remark, which may serve, as a key to the whole difficulty. ‘Seest thou, how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?’ Faith indeed, that faith, by which in saint Paul’s sense of the word we are justified, is a very weak, a very imperfect thing. It requires much discipline, much cul-

ture to make it perfect; and to this very office works are appointed. But, that Abraham was really justified in the sight of God, before he gave this decisive evidence of the perfectness of his faith, is plain from the manner, in which Moses first states the fact in the book of Genesis. Speaking there of a conference, which he enjoyed with the almighty, long before Isaac was born, he states simply, that the lord brought him forth abroad and said—‘ Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them!’—and he said unto him—‘ So shall thy seed be’—: and Abram believed in the lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness. Now saint James in referring to this passage could not possibly mean to assert, that Abram was not justified or accepted, before Isaac was born, or that his justification was suspended, till it was seen, whether he could perform the work, on which it was made dependent. And besides, what was the particular work, which thus made his faith perfect? A work, which never was executed; for Isaac in fact was not sacrificed after all: and therefore, if in strictness of speech Abram could not be justified, except by some

work, actually performed, he clearly is not justified now, since the great work, to which both apostles refer in proof of his faith, remains to this day unaccomplished. The fact is, that both apostles mean precisely the same thing, though in compliance with the different views, with which they were writing, they have adopted different modes of expressing it. Saint Paul speaks of our justification in the eye of God, saint James of our justification to the eye of the world. Now Abram's readiness to sacrifice his son, Isaac, though he knew, that on his life hung all the promises, both proved to the world and perfected in himself that faith, which he had possessed long before. It proved, that he believed God implicitly and was assured, that he would himself find out a way to accomplish his own word in the midst of apparent impossibilities; and it moreover strengthened his faith in him, as all other faculties are strengthened, by exercise. Only saint Paul, who was arguing on the abstract question of justification, spoke strictly, and identified it with the secret sentiment of faith, as seen by God; and saint James, who was opposing the error of those, who rested upon their

faith without producing fruit from it, as though, being justified, they were therefore saved and had no need of holiness, spoke loosely, as men in practical discussions usually do, and associated justification with that great act of faith, which proved its existence to the world, hereby affording us a memorable precedent of not contending about words, where the things, implied by them, are understood. That this is actually the case in the two epistles, is yet further evident from saint Paul having in a passage, already quoted, not far from the text now under discussion, used the word, justified, in opposition to being saved, while saint James plainly employs it, as in some measure identified with it, saying—
‘What doth it profit, my brethren, though a
‘man say he hath faith, and have not works?
‘Can faith save him? Ye see then, how that by
‘works a man is justified and not by faith only.’

Such is the doctrine of justification by faith. It is necessary doubtless, that this faith should lead to holiness of life, and consequently, that it should produce works, meet for repentance, even the works or deeds of the law;^x and the faith, which does not in its due season produce them,

is dead, and will not justify. Yet still it is the faith and not the work, which is acceptable in the sight of God; and, the instant he discerns that faith, before it has time to work any other act, but that of looking and praying to him, he justifies the sinner. To him, that worketh not, but believeth on him, that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. In the instance of Abraham God evidently remitted the work and accepted the faith, as righteousness. The penitent thief had but time to say—‘ Lord, ‘ remember me, when thou comest into thy kingdom!’—, when our saviour replied—‘ This day ‘ shalt thou be with me in Paradise.’ And, when a woman came behind him in the press to touch the hem of his garment, there being in this action nothing, which could be noticed, as fulfilling any part of the law, he turned round to her and said —‘ O woman, great is thy faith. Be it unto ‘ thee according to thy word!’

And indeed what is there new or marvellous in all this? Do we not ordinarily in the intercourse of the world accept the good will of those we love for the deed? And, when we receive a present or an act of kindness from a friend, are

we not much better pleased with the friendly disposition than with the fruit of it? Nay. Is not even the most worthless trifle, which we should not regard or value from any other quarter, grateful to us, as coming from those we love? And this must in all reason be much more the case in our dealings with God than it is in our communications with our fellowcreatures: for our friends may have it in their power to do us an essential service, but we can do nothing for God. All our service is nothing to him; the whole world is nothing; and, if he ever takes pleasure in any thing, which we do, it can only be for the sake of that inclination of the heart towards him, which it indicates. Our faith he accepts; our love he values; and our service he requires. But there is this difference between our service and our faith, that, whereas the former fixes his attention on our works, which are necessarily imperfect and stained with sin, the latter diverts his eye from us to Christ Jesus, in whom he is always well pleased.

I come then in the last place to some of those objections to the doctrine of justification by faith,

which hinder it, in the judgment of many at least, from being either received or preached so generally as it deserves.

There are some persons, who do not altogether dispute the truth of the doctrine, when properly explained, but yet consider it, as liable to perversion and dangerous at least, though true. They think, that, while the few, who understand it correctly and explain it properly, may escape pollution, the multitude will draw from it an argument to continue in sin, and, neglecting to work out their salvation with fear and trembling, will trust to their faith to cover all. They fear an antinomian result from it; and, while they observe on the one hand, that saint Paul admitted its liability to perversion, they feel themselves supported by the example and countenanced by the authority of saint James in upholding rather the counterpoise to this danger and maintaining, that faith without works is dead. But these reasonings, when calmly considered, will seem rather to conduct us to an opposite conclusion and prove the necessity of unfolding it fully and explaining it clearly: for

surely, if they uphold strongly the counterpoise of saint James, they will give a wrong inclination to the scale, if they withdraw from the other side the weighty truth, the dangers of which required that corrective to steady it: and in respect to the authority of saint Paul it is plain, that, though he perceived the handle, which ungodly men would make of it, though he was aware, how some would wrest it into an excuse for sin, and others oppose it, as amounting to a licence for immorality, that only rendered him more strenuous in maintaining its integrity, unfolding its proportions, and guarding against its perversion: for he saw in it a cornerstone of the church and an advanced post, as it were, of the christian system, which no true soldier of Christ would abandon.

But (I believe) by far the most prevailing cause, which hinders men from embracing this truth, is the humbling and debasing nature of it. The pride of man, though it may bear to be told, in general terms, that he is a sinner, cannot yet endure to hear, that he is such a sinner, that not one of his works can be re-

garded, as a ground of justification before God. So long as we can find something in the dignity of our nature to compensate for its sinfulness, and may hope to further or promote its restitution in some measure by our own inherent, remaining righteousness, there is something, in hope at least, for pride to feed upon; and we are ready to bewail our infirmity and acknowledge our errors, provided we can only entertain the thought, however distant, of eventually overcoming by our own natural strength its imperfections. But, when we must owe our very first step in this warfare to the free grace of another, when we must receive our justification, as a free gift, and come to Jesus for reconciliation, before any of our works can be regarded with favour, this is too humbling, too degrading a sentiment to be tolerated: and yet this humbling character is itself perhaps a presumption in favour of its being the very doctrine, intended by saint Paul; for he thus closes his argument upon the whole subject—‘Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay. But by the law of faith.’

After all however there is one grand objection, which must be answered, because, unless an answer can be found to it, the doctrine itself deserves to be abandoned, as derogatory to the honour of God and unworthy of a place in the christian system. The objection is this, that it makes the law useless and thus represents the almighty, as passing, only that he might supersede it. The answer of saint Paul to this objection is triumphant. ‘Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid! Yea. We establish the law’—: and an examination into the grounds of that answer may well close the present inquiry, because, if successful, it solves every objection, that can be urged to the tendency of the doctrine, and sets the divine sanction and moral obligations of it upon the surest basis.

Now in the first place it must be acknowledged, that previously to our justification in any sense the law of God was broken by every one of us; and thus, unless some atonement could be offered for this breach, it would have been effectually made void. Even though faith therefore have not the effect of making us keep the

law, it cannot be said to have that of making it void, because it was actually made so before. Secondly consider, what was our state previously to this justification! and you will perceive, that there was no chance of our ever doing otherwise than make void the law, except by the bringing in of a better hope. We had offended God. We knew, that we had offended him. We knew, that he was offended with us, and that consequently we were at enmity with him. But the law required, that we should love him before and above all things. Now how could we do this, unless we were first reconciled to him? Is it in human nature, in unrenewed human nature, to love an enemy? Is it in a condemned criminal to love his judge? That were to suppose an anomaly as well as an improbability: for, if we did love him, we should not be sinners. Nay. Is it not rather an acknowledged principle in the heart of man to hate the being, whom he has injured? If this be truth, as even heathen philosophy bears witness, then here we see an insuperable bar to all observance of the law of God, that is not begun by reconciliation. Grant then a reconciliation

to be necessary! Yet how is it to be brought about, except by the forgiveness of our sins? The offended must take the first step in the business. He must be reconciled to us, before we can be reconciled to him. But let us in the next place suppose him reconciled! Let us suppose him to have forgiven our sins! Let us suppose, that we are justified, our offences pardoned, and our persons accepted! Does this help us forward towards keeping the law? This is the question, which we have to consider; and upon it we may safely rest the merits of the whole controversy.

Observe then first of all the change, which has taken place in our condition! We thought ourselves hated by God. We find ourselves beloved by him, nay, so loved by him, that after having transferred all the guilt and punishment of our offences upon his own son, he has freely put away our sins and offered us grace for salvation. Can such a change as this be experienced, can such mercy be believed in, without expanding our minds and kindling in us corresponding emotions of gratitude? Surely we cannot fail to love God, when we find, that he first loved us. The love of Christ constraineth us;

and through the overpowering sense of it, against the tendency of our natural corruption, we are reconciled to God. Such a faith as this is, a faith in the love of Christ, cannot but excite love; and truly love is the fulfilling of the law. It cannot but be a great advantage towards that fulfilment to be at peace with God. If we were to be justified by our works, we must be under continual uneasiness and alarm by reason of our daily transgressions, whereas now we approach him, as children, and serve him better, because we love to serve him.

Again why was it, that before our reconciliation we feared, we even hated God, we were enemies to him and to his law, but because we believed and after reading his curses against sin and sinners were constrained to believe, that he must necessarily hate us because of our multiplied transgressions? So also, when we find, that instead of hating he loves us, when we measure the extent of his love to us, or rather, when we find and believe it to be immeasurable, how can we do otherwise than love him in return? Such a love as this never was, nor is, nor can be felt without striking a kindred spark in our souls,

which, however faint, will yet, like a candle shining in a dark place, enlighten the gloom, that dwelt there: and this was precisely the thing we wanted. We had before no affection towards godliness. We could have none. It was all a heavy burden and a sorry task to us; and it is well known, with how much happier success as well as lighter hearts we go about those things, which we love, than we do about those, to which we feel an aversion.

Now faith worketh by love. We have supposed the presence both of the faith and of the love. Let us see, what will be the nature of the works, produced by them! Loving God, we must of course love to please him. We see, how a father delights to please his child and even falls in love with his wayward fancies, because they show, how he may be pleased. How much more then must a true, reconciled christian love the law of God, which is holy and just and perfect? He will say with David—‘Lord, ‘what love have I unto thy law? All the day ‘long is my study in it.’ He will no longer ask himself, as under the terrors of the law—‘How far may I indulge myself without offend-

‘ing my judge?’—but—‘How can I deny myself so as to please my God?’ He will no longer seek to have a mitigated law: for he will love it too well to wish it mitigated; and, though with many imperfections, he will go forward under a sense of the favour of God to fulfil according to the measure of the grace, given unto him, all its most sacred injunctions, ever falling indeed, but still recovering, and hoping at the last in the divine mercy through the investiture of his redeemer’s likeness not only to love, but to keep his law with sinless perfection.

Do we then make void the law through faith? Yea. We establish the law. We establish it beyond its former strength. We point out the only path, by which it may be kept and followed, not indeed all at once, but as the shining light, which shineth more and more until the perfect day. He, that is justified by faith, will do the deeds of the law. He is justified by faith, that he may do them by love. The task is arduous indeed; the way is long; and the daily communications of the divine spirit are necessary to carry him through it. But he is confident of this very thing, that he, which

hath begun a good work in him, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. The work of sanctification, which was begun in him by faith, will proceed from faith to faith, from one measure of faith to another, from justifying faith to sanctifying faith, till the task is done, the law fulfilled, and faith itself absorbed in beatific vision.

S E R M O N VI.

1 Cor. i. 30.

Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.

THE narrow and partial views, which some men take, of the scheme of the gospel, is one great obstacle to the reception of it in its integrity. Some doctrine is perhaps fixed upon, as the great all in all of salvation, and the rest are made to bow down in the dust before it. One person stands up, as the advocate of grace, another, as the upholder of works, as if both were not essential to the production of evangelical holiness. Some again confine their zeal to questions of ecclesiastical unity and discipline, neglecting those saving doctrines, which are requisite to give them value and importance; which leads others on the contrary in their zeal for doctrine to forget

the interests of the church. Many, who believe in the atonement of Christ, are blind to the influence of his example; and many, who are impressed with the benefit of his example, are thence led to undervalue or even to deny his atonement.

The neglect of any doctrine will be sure eventually by a kind of corrective justice to exalt it into undue importance. Thus it has been in particular with regard to the doctrine of justification by faith. That cardinal and distinguishing doctrine of the gospel having been by some persons depressed below its due rank and station in the scale of christianity, others have thence been tempted to rest upon it in such a manner, as though nothing more were wanting, than to be justified, to constitute the perfection of a christian. I have therefore selected a text, which by bringing Christ before us in all the high relations, which he bears to our souls, may have the effect of guarding us against the too common error of magnifying one of his offices to the disparagement of the rest. ‘Of him’ (that is of God) ‘are ye in Christ Jesus, ‘who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.’

In this summary enumeration however of those important characters, under which Christ Jesus is every where presented to our view, there are some particulars, which to an eye, unpractised in scriptural language, may require a little previous elucidation. First it is said—‘Ye are in Christ Jesus’—; which is an expression, continually occurring in the new testament; and it is best explained by a reference to the fact of our having been in Adam. We were in him indeed at the beginning; and in consequence of that connexion, we partook of the corruption of his nature by the fall. Now our relation to Christ, if we are indeed related to him, is never represented, as less intimate than that, which we bear to Adam: for we are said to have the mind of Christ as well as the mind of Adam, and are partakers of his nature as truly as we partook originally of the nature of Adam. How then can this relationship be more accurately expressed than, as it is here, by our being in Christ, as we were in Adam? ‘Hereby know we,’ (says saint John,) ‘that we are in him. He, that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.’ Secondly it is ‘of him’ (that is of God), that ‘we are in Christ

‘ Jesus.’ He might have left us, as we were in Adam, and abandoned us to the bitter consequences of that connexion. But his mercy could not be so satisfied. ‘ Of his own will begat he us ‘ in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.’ A consideration of these four particulars, while it will furnish an opportunity for distinguishing more explicitly the different offices of our saviour, will naturally lead to the conclusion, that he is both the author and finisher of our faith, that we owe to him every thing, that there is, of good, belonging to us, that we have therefore nothing to glory of in ourselves, but that in the words of the apostle, ‘ according as it is written—“ He, that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord !”

And first he is our wisdom. If so, without Christ we were unwise: and accordingly the first part of the chapter has been devoted to the proof of this. ‘ Where is the wise?’—says saint Paul. ‘ Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of ‘ this world? The world by wisdom knew not ‘ God. But God hath chosen the foolish things ‘ of the world to confound the wise, as it is

‘ written—“ I will destroy the wisdom of the wise
“ and will bring to nothing the understanding of
“ the prudent.” In another passage divine wisdom is still more plainly contrasted to human.
‘ The Greeks seek after wisdom. But we preach
‘ Christ crucified, unto the Greeks foolishness, but
‘ unto them, which are called, Christ, the wisdom
‘ of God.’ The wisdom of the world then is that,
which the Greeks sought after, that, by which all
the depths of nature were explored, eloquence enriched,
and the works of art and science brought to perfection.
But this wisdom could never bring a man nearer to God. Nay. It was notorious,
that those, who had cultivated it with the greatest success,
were gross idolaters, strangers to the nature of true godliness,
and, though they had penetrated far into the duties of man to man,
knew nothing of the means, by which man was to be reconciled to God.
But the wisdom of God is Christ crucified. The apostle does not say merely,
that the wisdom of God is made known to us by Christ,
or that the knowledge of his crucifixion is the first step to wisdom,
but that Christ crucified is himself the very wisdom of God,
and that consequently the only way to attain that divine wis-

dom is union to the crucified saviour. To possess Christ is to possess the true wisdom, and to be in him, as we originally were in Adam, is to be wise, not, as our first parents became wise, through the knowledge of evil, but to be wise unto salvation through the knowledge of that being, who alone is perfectly wise and good. A similar contrast is drawn in the twentyeighth chapter of Job, who says, that there is a vein for the silver and a place for gold, where they find it, that there is a path, made in the bowels of the earth, which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture's eye hath not seen, that in short the wisdom of man is sufficient to enable him to penetrate into many things, that are hidden, while yet the true wisdom, which consists in fearing the lord, is not to be found on earth, but is known to God alone. Again the fruits of these different kinds of wisdom are accurately described by saint James. We have all witnessed, if we have not felt, the heat and eagerness for victory, with which men contend in defence of some disputed truth: and of this the apostle avails himself, as a criterion: 'If ye have
' bitter envying and strife' (says he) 'in your
' hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth!

‘ This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is
‘ earthly, sensual, devilish: for, where envying
‘ and strife is, there is confusion and every evil
‘ work. But the wisdom, that is from above, is
‘ first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be
‘ intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without
‘ partiality and without hypocrisy.’ The wisdom
of God then consists in knowing God, in knowing
him, as we know our parents, in knowing him
(that is to say) for our friend and protector: and it
can be possessed consequently by none, but those,
who are in Christ Jesus. It can only be derived
from God’s giving, who has been pleased to make
Christ our wisdom. But in those, who have it,
it will be followed, as saint James argues, by the
best fruits of the spirit of God: for undoubtedly,
if Christ is made unto us wisdom, he is also our
righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.

Let us therefore weigh the import of the second
office, here ascribed to Christ Jesus! He of God
is made unto us righteousness. Now we are made
or accounted righteous, or in one word we are
justified, through faith; and the object of that
faith is Christ, crucified for our sins, so, that, if

Christ crucified is our wisdom, he is our righteousness also. Whereas we were unrighteous by nature, Christ Jesus is of God made unto us righteousness, and that by faith: for, as saint Paul expresses it in his epistle to the Romans, to him, that worketh not, but believeth on him, that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Such a person is grafted on Christ Jesus; and, being unrighteous by nature, he is by virtue of this union at once reputed righteous, justified from all his sins, freely forgiven, and accepted to new pardon and favour for his sake, in whom he believed. He becomes a partaker of that renewed nature; and, all his past sins having been forgotten and washed out in the blood of the blessed Jesus, he is justified and acquitted and is once more righteous before God.

Nevertheless, unspeakable as is the blessing of our justification, since without it we must for ever remain strangers and enemies to God, our saviour, though without it all our efforts must be vain, and the very knowledge of God, could it be attained, fruitless, it is no more at last than an entrance within the threshold of christianity. One

great obstacle to men's receiving the doctrine of justification by faith only is a notion, that, when men are justified by faith, nothing more is wanting to secure their salvation ; than which no mistake can be more alarming or dangerous. When men are justified, they are only put into the way of salvation. They may yet be entangled again in the pollutions of the world, and may turn from the holy commandment, delivered unto them. They may still fall away and renounce the hope, that is in them. Nay. If they only stand still in this stage of their progress and do not go on even unto perfection, the scriptures warn them, that their faith is dead, that they are yet in their sins, that they are of them, who draw back unto perdition. Though the first step is taken, and they are justified, the great work of sanctification, which is the chief end and business of christianity, remains to be accomplished. When Christ has been made our righteousness, he has yet to be made our sanctification.

The same view of this subject may be collected from the eightyfifth psalm, where a prophet says—
' Thou hast forgiven the offence of thy people and
' covered all their sins. Thou hast taken away

‘all thy displeasure and turned thyself from thy
‘wrathful indignation. Turn us then, O God,
‘our saviour! Thine own work is done already.
‘Now do ours!’—: and again he sums up the
whole doctrine in these words. ‘Righteousness
‘or justification shall go before him; and then,
‘when the sinner is justified, he’ (that is God)
‘shall direct his going,’ which is the precise work
of sanctification, ‘in the way.’

The very same doctrine also may be found,
more amply stated by Elihu, in the thirtythird
chapter of Job. ‘His soul’ (says he of man) ‘his
‘soul draweth near unto the grave, and his life to
‘the destroyers. If there be a messenger with
‘him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to
‘show unto man his’ (that is God’s) ‘upright-
‘ness, then he is gracious unto him and saith—
“Deliver him from going down to the pit! I have
“found a ransom.” His flesh shall be fresher than
‘a child’s. He shall return to the days of his
‘youth. He shall pray unto God; and he will be
‘favorable unto him: and he shall see his face
‘with joy; for he will render unto him his righ-
‘teousness. He looketh upon men; and, if one
‘say—“I have sinned and perverted that, which

“ was right, and it profited me not—,” he will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light. Lo! All these things worketh God oftentimes with man, to bring back his soul from the pit to be enlightened with the light of the living.’

As this part of the saviour’s office therefore is one of immense importance and essentially necessary to compleat the scheme of justification by faith only, it will be desirable to enter upon it a little more largely.

What then is the condition of the justified sinner? He finds his sins forgiven and his person accepted through the merits of another as fully as if he had himself never deviated from the path of righteousness; and he is as well assured of reconciliation with the father as if Christ had with his own lips said to him—‘Thy sins are forgiven thee. Go in peace!’ Being justified by faith, he has peace with God. But is forgiveness all, that he wants? Far from it. Christ gave himself for us, that he might purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works; and the end of the commandment is not faith, but charity, though it is such a charity only as proceeds out of a pure

heart and of a good conscience and of faith unfeigned: for this is a faithful saying, that they, which have believed in God, might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men. Good works therefore, the produce of enlightened charity, must adorn the end of that service, to which faith supplies the means: and thus faith worketh by love.

Now this is the very sanctification of the spirit, which in the language of the text Christ is made unto us. It is in fact the very alteration and renovation of our polluted nature, without which justification would be ineffectual, and Christ have died in vain: for to what purpose would it be to have had our sins pardoned and our persons justified, if the sins, thus extinguished, were to be continually revived, and no advancement effected in holiness? An imputed righteousness might perhaps serve us, while on earth. But we must have a righteousness of our own in heaven, derived from Christ indeed, but inherent in ourselves: and this is that life of a Christian, which according to saint Paul is hidden with Christ in God.

There are therefore two questions to be solved, first, what is meant by sanctification in this pas-

sage, or in what respects it differs from justification, and secondly, in what sense Christ is said to be made sanctification unto us of God.

As to the first, it appears, though a few passages may certainly be cited, in which this distinction is not observed, that justification is properly retrospective. It relates to past sins, which are forgiven through the blood of Jesus according to those words of saint Paul—‘ Through this man
‘ is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins ;
‘ and by him all, that believe, are justified from
‘ all things, from which ye could not be justified
‘ by the law of Moses.’ But sanctification regards the actual state and changes the present nature. By justification a sinner is accepted, but remains a sinner still. Through sanctification he ceases to be a sinner. When justification therefore has been conferred, sanctification commences ; for justification is a single act, sanctification a progressive work : and what is that work ? It is the work of the holy spirit in the soul. Through justification that spirit is admitted. In sanctification it operates by preventing the motions of sin, by furthering every holy thought, by fixing the heart on heaven, by inspiring godly principles, by

gradually changing the whole mind and temper, by turning the disobedient to the wisdom of the just. The work of sanctification therefore is a slow work and meets with many obstructions. But it is the work of that blessed spirit, who is able to convert hindrances into helps, who first gave to unfinished man the breath of life, and can give to mortal man the life of holiness.

Now, this being the work of sanctification, Christ is made our sanctification in the same way, in which he was made our wisdom and our righteousness, namely by the spirit, which he hath given us: for all these worketh that one and the selfsame spirit, who is the bond of union between us and our saviour. But for Christ, we have neither righteousness, nor sanctity in the sight of God. But, the moment we have put on Jesus Christ, the moment we have by faith received him, as our righteousness, he is willing to become our sanctification, to prepare us for the new destinies, to which he has invited us, and to make us meet for the kingdom of heaven, that, as we were before called to righteousness, we might also be chosen through sanctification of the spirit: for—‘They may receive’—said he to saint Paul in sending him forth to the

gentiles—‘ They may receive both forgiveness of ‘ sins and inheritance among them, that are sanctified, by faith, that is in me.’ The two things are essentially different: for many are called, but few chosen. But, though different, we have them both in Christ Jesus, who by sending his spirit into our hearts is actually present with us at all times, to originate every pious thought and cleanse the vessel, which he has chosen for his use: for it is through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all, that we are sanctified. Thus are we the temples of his spirit; and Christ is at once our wisdom, our righteousness, and our sanctification.

Were indeed our sanctification, like our justification, a single act, we should now have completed the view of that stupendous work, which Christ has wrought for our salvation. But unfortunately the traces of our corrupted nature continue to beset us as long as we are in this stage of our existence. The work of sanctification cannot go on uninterrupted. The lusts or the laziness of our fallen nature will ever thwart its operations; and the spirit of God with-

in us is continually grieved by our reluctance, backslidings, and positive sins.

We are thus in reality and not by a mere figure of speech partakers of two natures, one, which we derived from Adam, and one, to which we were born again in Christ, or, as the scriptures call them, the spirit and the flesh; and the same volume, which makes the distinction, tells us also, that the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other. As born of Adam, we are prone to every sin; as born of Christ, we cannot commit sin, so, that, while even the holy Paul says of himself—‘I know, that in me (that ‘is in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing’—, it is yet said expressly by saint John—‘Whosoever is born of God, sinneth not.’, The same individual is the subject of opposite and contrary descriptions, because he is the heir of opposite and contrary natures: and with a view to save us from the consequences of this internal conflict, to mitigate its asperity, and give a preponderance to the efforts of grace, Christ Jesus, our saviour, has condescended to become not only our sanctification, but our redemption too, our

redemption from the power of sin, as he had before been our redemption from the guilt of it: for so unceasingly does this infection of nature remain, yea, in them, that be regenerated, that one of these offices would be insufficient without the other. By the first he inclines us towards good. By the second he represses our natural inclination to evil. In the one capacity he gives us strength. In the other he secures that strength from being tempted above what we are able to bear, and thus watches over every faculty of our souls, barring every inlet to sin and preoccupying every avenue to temptation, that in his strength and by his carefulness we may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. As our wisdom, he enlightens our understandings, as our righteousness, he increases our faith, as our sanctification, he creates our holiness, and, as our redemption, he subdues our sins: for by one offering he hath perfected for ever them, that are sanctified. How justly then is he called our saviour, if indeed God hath from the beginning chosen us to salvation through sanctification of the spirit and belief of the truth, whereunto he called us by the gospel to the obtain-

ing of the glory of our lord, Jesus Christ! and how justly is the inference of the apostle drawn, that no flesh should glory in his presence, but that, according as it is written, he, that glorieth, let him glory, not in himself certainly, in his wit or strength or holiness or integrity, but only in the lord!

The view, which is here given by saint Paul, of our salvation, as flowing entirely and exclusively from the grace and goodness of another, is indeed sufficiently abasing to human pride; which has therefore been in all ages unwilling to receive it. At the same time the objections, taken to it, even on this score, are often irrelevant and by no means fairly deducible from the statement, above given, as it is hoped, from scripture. ‘Have we then,’ (it is sometimes asked contemptuously) ‘have we then no part ‘to act in the great business of our salvation? ‘Are we to be degraded into passive machines, ‘on whom supernatural influence is to produce ‘a saving effect?’ By no means. No such inference fairly results from the doctrine in question. Jesus Christ is indeed made of God unto

us both wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption. But yet it is left to us to determine, whether we will be wise and righteous and holy and redeemed. The grace of God, that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. But, though it bringeth salvation, it does not force it upon us; though it empowers, it does not compel, and, like the God, who gives it, has no respect of persons.

What then is it, that makes the difference between the saint and the sinner? Even this, that some of us refuse, while others receive the offered saviour. It is for us to entertain or to reject the mercy, which is proposed to us. He stands at the door and knocks. It is for us to open or shut. So far and so far only we are workers together with God. He gives us grace. He urges us to use it. He forgives, invites, exhorts, enables, inspires. But, if we will not yield to this condescending influence, if we put away the means of grace and resist the suggestions of holiness, we ourselves renew the sepa-

ration between us and God; and, though our salvation can only be purchased by the saviour, it is ours to avail ourselves of this purchased salvation or proudly to turn away from it. Undoubtedly the wretched cripple in the gospel could not have healed his withered arm. But yet, when commanded to stretch it forth, it depended upon himself either to try to stretch it out and be healed, or to cavil at the order and retain his infirmity.

The privileges, which accrue to us from this arrangement, are numerous. Chiefly the holiness, to which we are now exalted, is much holier than that, to which we could ever have hoped to rise by any created strength, since it is Christ, who sanctifies us, and since we are redeemed by him, who is over all, God, blessed for ever. If we are really made wise, righteous, holy, and redeemed from evil by divine grace, we are made infinitely wiser, more righteous, holier, and better than we could ever have become by any power, short of the atoning efficacy of Jesus. So little occasion have they to despise the offered mercy of God, who prefer any poor

efforts of human morality to the wisdom and righteousness, the sanctification and redemption of the son of God, who would rather be saved by themselves in their own way than in the way of God's goodness and by the help of God's holy grace.

The work of the spirit in the soul of man is regarded by many in these days, as an enthusiastic vision, though for no reason, as far as appears, but because his motions are not as perceptible as his effects are permanent and demonstrable. But the circulation of the blood and the secretions of the body may upon nearly the same grounds and with equal show of reasoning be disputed as the necessary agency of the holy spirit in man's salvation. The wind bloweth, where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell, whence it cometh, and whither it goeth. So is every one, that is born of the spirit. Nothing can be more contrary than the conduct of a truly spiritual man to that of him, who follows no suggestions, but those of his original nature: and yet, because the operations of the holy spirit, by which that change is brought about, are indistinguishable,

the existence of those operations is called in question, as if the very same thing might not be said of the operations of the human mind itself, the acts of which are so subtle and instantaneous as to have baffled the search of philosophic analysis. We have in the mean time one clue, which is quite sufficient for all practical purposes to guide us in this discrimination, if we will be contented to ascribe all our godly motions, so far as they are godly, to the influence of the spirit of God, and all our profane or selfish thoughts to our own spontaneous suggestion.

Lastly it is declared in the text, not only, that Christ became our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, but that he was made so of God: for the sacrifice of his death was to be accepted by the father, before it could be available to our recovery. The work of his sanctification must needs be admitted in heaven, before it can be applied on earth. He redeemed us, as man. His redemption required therefore to be accepted by God: and the father in having accepted it has compleated the gracious work of our reconciliation; in which God, the father, ac-

cepts the atonement of God, the son, which is made effectual to the salvation of believers through the sanctifying influence of God, the holy ghost.

How then ought we to humble ourselves before that awful trinity, whose concurrent operation has borne the whole weight of our salvation! and how deeply are we bound in gratitude to offer up the lively sacrifice of a reformed and sanctified life to that being, who is at once the alpha and omega of our salvation, the beginning and the ending, the first and the last!

To that blessed trinity be all glory and worship for ever!

S E R M O N VII.

Hebrews vi. 1.

Leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection, not laying again the foundation!

THAT a foundation is of no use without the superstructure, is a truth too obvious to be remarked: and yet, when the same truth is transferred from material buildings and applied to matters of science, how commonly do we find it disregarded! Many are contented with the grammar of language or the elements of philosophy, and think they have made a proficiency, when in fact they have only qualified themselves to make it.

This mistake however becomes of more consequence, when it occurs in the theory of morals. In the former cases it could only minister to a little self-conceit, give rise to a harmless display of pedantry, or at the worst throw some impediments in the way of useful

inquiry. But here the error is truly dangerous. When we hear persons canvassing again and again the very first principles of morality, suffering their opinions to be blown away by the first breath of opposition, that they may have the pleasure of rearing again the ideal fabric, when we behold them pass with sceptical indifference from speculation to speculation, without respecting either the most generally admitted maxims or the most self-evident truths, but laying open all alike to the same interminable licence of investigation, we can hardly forbear to ask, whether a system, which acknowledges no data, can lead to any conclusion, or how we are to expect any steadiness from that person in the searching hour of trial, who has not yet fixed the rules, by which his conduct must be regulated.

So much it may be seasonable to have hinted in regard to an intellectual infirmity, which is perhaps too prevalent. That there is a correspondent infirmity in the business of religion also, saint Paul plainly intimates in the text, the direct purport of which is to exhort us to leave principles and go on unto perfection. The fault, opposed to this direction, is more fully discussed

in the preceding chapter and is so strongly reprobated there as to make it evident, that the apostle considered it, as a fault of no ordinary magnitude. ‘When for the time ye ought to be teachers,’—says he to his Hebrew converts—‘ye have need, that one teach you again’—and what must he teach them? ‘Which be the first principles of the oracles of God.’ Here then is the precise error we have been speaking of pointed out, and that too in the language of severe reproof: after which it is added, as if to aggravate that reproof—‘Ye are become such as have need of milk and not of strong meat: for every one, that useth milk, is unskilful in the word of righteousness; for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them, that are of full age, even those, who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.’ Thus does saint Paul represent this vice of hovering about the beginnings and first principles of religion, as a perpetual childhood, which from the imperfection of its nature can never come to maturity or acquire that hardiness and energy, which is necessary to give it stability and use. The persons, who are infected with it,

can never have their faculties sufficiently under command or their spiritual perceptions disciplined to discern good from evil; and why? Because their inquiries terminate at a point, preliminary to this distinction, and, resting in the outworks and fences or at best in the first approaches of christianity, never penetrate so far as to discover the real nature of that good, which it recommends, or of that evil, which it shuns and heals. ‘Therefore’ (proceeds the apostle in our text, which prescribes the antidote to this distemper) ‘therefore, leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection, not laying again the foundation!’

Considering it then, as the evident scope of the apostle in this passage to dissuade us from stopping short at the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, and to urge us on to its hidden intent and meaning, even unto perfection, I will attempt in illustration of his argument to investigate, what points he would embrace in the former of these classes, and what are those reserved for the latter.

Now saint Paul has himself told us, what the

foundation of religion, as that phrase is used in this place, consists of, namely of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.

It is to be feared, that this catalogue will startle some persons, as containing too much of the actual structure of religion to be included in the foundation, more indeed than laymen in general are inclined to study, and much, which even those intended for the church are often disposed to wave and resign to the more eminent of that order. But the words of saint Paul are positive against such an interpretation. There is indeed a loose practice nowadays of applying the term, divinity, to the mere evidences of christianity and to an exposition of some of the hard names in controversy; with a knowledge and even a superficial knowledge of which many rest satisfied through their lives and yet pass for tolerable divines. But saint Paul's elements out-run the farthest boundaries of their science: for, if they would be only children in godliness according to his notion, they must not merely

satisfy themselves, that the christian religion is true, but be acquainted too, experimentally acquainted, with some of its leading doctrines and requisitions. Such are all, which are here enumerated. A belief in the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment being presupposed, we advance to the practical results of these doctrines, namely repentance from dead works and faith toward God; which are the two great requisites, that entitle us to baptism and to the laying on of hands or confirmation. These are the elements of the apostle's religion; and they are called a foundation, first principles, and food for children in the faith, because they were in his days demanded of all proselytes in the first instance, as essentially necessary for their admission into the church and indispensable qualifications for baptism: for they did not then consider it godliness to know, but to practise the faith of the gospel; and these are but first steps in the life, however much they may imply in the knowledge of a christian. For this reason they placed nothing in the class of elements, which is of a mere speculative nature, nothing of controversy, nothing of mystery, but

those plain principles only, which are fundamentally requisite to bring a heathen to Christ or a christian to the spotless model of christianity. He was first taught, that he will live for ever, and that after the separation of soul and body he must render an account for all his actions, nay, even for his most secret thoughts to God, the judge of all; and when this had led him to reflect sufficiently upon his past sins and upon his present guiltiness, he was then called upon in the name of Jesus to repent and believe in God, who had appointed a mediator, through whom he might obtain remission for the past and grace for the future: all which if he professed with a true heart and a good conscience, he became immediately entitled to baptism, and they laid their hands upon him, that he might receive the holy ghost. This at least was the history of the Ethiopian eunuch; who only said—‘What doth hinder me to be baptized?’—, and Philip said—‘If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest’—, and he answered and said—‘I believe, that Jesus Christ is the son of God’—: and he baptized him.

The circumstances of the case indeed are now

altered by the establishment of christianity and the universal adoption of infant baptism. But assuredly whatever was required from adult converts before their baptism must be expected from us after our baptism; and the same list of attainments, which fell under the title of principles in the primitive ages of the church, must rank within the same limits now and ever. In this respect there can be no change; and it must still remain true, that, until we have laid the foundation of repentance from dead works and faith toward God, we are such as have need of milk and not of strong meat, and, when perhaps for the time we ought to be teachers, we have still need, that one teach us again, which be the first principles of the oracles of God.

If this be a step, which many of us have yet to take, what shall we say, when the apostle bids us, leaving these principles, to go onward, nay, to go on unto perfection? Doubtless it ought to quicken us in our exertions to attain that first step, that so, knowing, what true faith is, and by the blessing of God possessing it, we may be prepared to advance forward in our christian

course, and, like the holy apostle himself, forgetting those things, which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things, which are before, to press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Saint Paul gives us a most urgent reason, why we should thus continually press on to higher hopes, and not draw back, or even, like Lot's wife, so much as look back to what is behind us, whether for the sake of our own repose, or for the benefit of others. 'For' (says he) 'it is impossible for those, who were once enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and were made partakers of the holy ghost and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance.

What then are these particulars in the christian life (for to these we are now led by the course of our inquiry), which are limited by first principles on the one side and perfection on the other? It would be endless, perhaps hopeless, to recount them. They manifestly comprehend, or rather they constitute the whole of what may be termed the substance in opposition to the

shell of christianity; neither has saint Paul reckoned up these particulars for us, as he has the others, so, that we must be guided by other lights rather than that of our text, and seek direction in this difficulty from some different parts of scripture.

First however let us ask, what it is, that has led our author into this digression upon the difference between babes and men in Christ and the duty of going on unto perfection! For, if we can once perceive the point, to which the conduct of his argument would naturally have brought him, had not his readers been dull of hearing and unable to bear it, we shall of course have discovered one leading particular of our investigation and found a clue, by which to judge of the remainder: and with this information our apostle distinctly supplies us; for after saying—‘Let us go on unto perfection!’—he adds—‘And this will we do, if God permit’—and a few verses lower—‘Beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things, which accompany salvation, though we thus speak.’ Notwithstanding therefore his apprehensions concerning their dulness of hearing and infancy in religion, he obviously re-

solves to pursue his original subject, though not perhaps to that extent, to which he might have carried it, had not these objections existed.

Now the former part of this epistle had been employed by the apostle to prove, that our saviour was before his incarnation God, even the brightness of his father's glory, and the express image of his person. To this doctrine he had likewise added, that, having become man, he was now exalted to be our high priest, to the end, that, laying our prayers before the throne of grace, he might obtain reconciliation and support and glory for those, who believe in him. But these are only two premised truths, which, however grand and interesting, may prove but barren speculations, unless brought home to us by some ulterior doctrine, which may connect them with our own case and actual situation. Now that ulterior doctrine, to which he was proceeding, and to which he afterwards does proceed, is the intimate connexion, which subsists between us and our priest, who was not, like Aaron, ordained over a particular people, but, as Melchisedec, received tithes from him, in whose seed all the families of the earth are blessed, who did not, like the levites,

sacrifice repeatedly the blood of bulls and goats for his own sins as well as for those of his people, but, being altogether without sin, offered up his own blood once, and that for all men, who was not like the priests of the earthly temple, that served for a season only and then gave place to others, but, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life, abideth a priest continually. Between this man therefore and the whole race of true christians, however low in graces and attainments, there subsists an indissoluble union: and the bond of this union is on their part faith, not that faith only, by which they drew near with a true heart, and which had been already included among the first elements of christianity, but that, by which they hold fast their profession without wavering. Therefore he gives a most astonishing description of this faith and of those, who had persevered in it from the beginning of time unto that hour; who are all summed up among that hallowed number, the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, whom Jesus, the mediator of the new testament, will present at the last day before the throne of his father, and on whom he will confer,

as their priest and saviour, that crown, which he has won for them by his own unsullied and unchangeable righteousness. The epistle then concludes with some terrible denunciations of increasing vengeance against those, who shrink back from the course, which this faith prescribes to them, and directions for the exercise of those offices of charity and devotion, which will best ensure its continuance and promote its growth, being altogether an extended commentary on that apostolic precept—‘ These things I will, that thou
‘ affirm constantly, that they, which have be-
‘ lieved in God, might be careful to maintain
‘ good works.’

From this general statement it is evident, that faith in the apostle’s view of it constitutes, as it were, in some sense the beginning, middle, and end of christianity. Yet it appears too, that the faith of a christian will alter its character, as it proceeds: for the faith of a dying martyr is as materially different from the faith of an approved catechumen as the body of a full-grown man is from that of a tender infant. For faith of this latter description sincerity is the only quality, that is indispensable. But, as the Christian ad-

vances, his faith must become not only sincere, but fervent and active and constant, till it acquires firmness and strength, till it emanates in every virtue, and finally by the grace of God mortifies every sin. These then at length, my brethren, these graces of holiness and works of the spirit, by which the faith of a Christian guides him by slow advances from weakness to strength and from strength to perfection, these are the gradations, the steps, the links, of which we have been in search, which connect the foundation of a christian's hope to the end of his career and summit of his ambition. These, which comprehend the whole compass of moral law and all the branches of duty, every thing in a word, which is beyond mere sincerity and short of actual perfection, are the points, to which we are to go on, leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ and not laying again the foundation. Indeed it is plain from the view we have taken, that it is impossible for us to continue in this course without leaving the principles, no less impossible indeed than it would be for the traveller towards a distant country to keep ever in his view the point, from which he started. The christian's life is

a continual progress. As soon as he enters a new station in his journey, he quits the preceding and cannot return to it without loss. Therefore, as the apostle says, leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection, not returning to our rudiments, not resting, where we ought to run, not laying again the foundation!

If we would habitually attend to this rule, we should not have to complain so much of the little progress, made in religion. No one rests at the first principles of a science, but from not weighing, how much there is to follow. No one loiters or turns aside at the commencement of a journey, who recollects, that there is more before him than he can well finish before night. So also no one will waste his time in new-modelling the foundations of morality, who knows the immense value and vast size of the superstructure: and no one (I may add), who knows, what it is to be a christian indeed, how many graces it includes, how much fortitude it requires, how much perseverance it implies, who knows in short, how much there is still to do, what-

ever has been done already, will rest satisfied with acquiring the first principles, or think he has performed his task, when he has only laid a foundation. No one can long amuse himself with answering objections and solving difficulties, if he knows this to be all exterior to religion, and that his business lies within. Nay. Rather we must go on not a little way only, but unto perfection: for the path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

Perfection however (after all it must be confessed) is an awful word. Who may attain it with all his zeal? Who can hope for it with all his faith? In the next life by the mercies of Christ any man, in the present none. What degree of shortness of that final end, provided it be attended with sincerity, the almighty will accept and pardon, I suppose no one will presume to determine. No one can set limits to that all-encircling goodness, which has no where limited itself. But neither does the determination of this point concern us. Though the purpose of Providence is inscrutable, our duty is clear; and, while we are certain, that the almighty will not

punish any man for missing of a perfection, which was placed beyond his grasp, the anger of God is revealed and determined against those, who shroud their indolence under the plea of infirmity, who will not do what they can, because they cannot do what they would, and, because they despair of reaching, refuse to go on unto perfection.

S E R M O N V I I I .

1 Peter iii. 20. 21.

The longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was preparing, wherein few (that is eight) souls were saved by water; the like figure whereunto, even baptism, doth also now save us, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience to ward God.

FEW subjects have so much perplexed and divided christians as the doctrine of baptism, which yet is reckoned by saint Paul in his epistle to the Hebrews among the principles of the doctrine of Christ. Some look upon it, as forming the whole, others, as no part of christianity. These contemplate it, as a naked form and beggarly element, those, as synonymous with regeneration, necessarily productive of justifying faith, and equivalent to the saving grace of the

gospel. Without pretending to unravel all the mysteries, which involve this intricate question, I think, that there are three positions, which follow indisputably from the text, and which may serve to disembarass it from several of its apparent difficulties, if they may not even be regarded, as an answer to some of the opinions, which are strongly maintained on both sides, first, that the mere putting away of the filth of the flesh in baptism does not include, produce, or convey the answer of a good conscience toward God, secondly, that in order to have the answer of a good conscience toward God it is necessary to put away the filth of the flesh or in other words to submit to the external rite of baptism, and thirdly, that baptism, when perfect, (that is to say, when the answer of a good conscience toward God is superadded to the putting away of the filth of the flesh) doth in some sense save us. Under each of these heads important considerations will arise, affecting points at issue among all classes of christians; and the whole inquiry, if conducted under the direction of God's word and the influence of his holy spirit, cannot fail to elucidate the remarkable assertion of saint

Peter, that ^Xas the ark saved Noah, so also baptism doth now save us, though certainly in order to do so it must be understood to mean not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God.

First then the mere putting away of the filth of the flesh in baptism does not include, produce, or convey the answer of a good conscience toward God. This is clear from the very words of the apostle. ‘Baptism’ (says he) ‘doth now save us, ‘but not the putting away of the filth of the ‘flesh’—: and it would consequently be unnecessary to argue a point, which appears so obvious, had not attempts been made by venerated names to connect regeneration with baptism, as though the two, the washing and the renewing, the sign and the thing signified, always went together. The contrary to this position seems implied in this passage; where the answer of a good conscience may be considered, as analogous to regeneration, and the putting away of the filth of the flesh, as synonymous with the outward rite of baptism. But, as the persons, who identify the two, would not allow of this classification,

some further discussion of it becomes necessary, before the point can be regarded, as established.

Now upon an attentive comparison of all the texts, in which regeneration, a new birth, a new creature, a birth unto righteousness, which appear to be either convertible or kindred expressions, are used, it seems evident, that regeneration is the beginning of a progressive state, which ends in heaven. It is, as it were, the planting of that incorruptible seed, which gradually expands and ripens into what the scriptures denominate the new man in Christ Jesus. To state the matter more explicitly, by birth or natural generation we become creatures of the same nature with Adam. By the new birth or regeneration we become creatures of the same nature with the man, Christ Jesus. Yet, as birth does not render us perfect men in respect to nature, so neither does regeneration render us perfect men in respect to grace. Each is but the commencement of a course to be compleated afterwards: and the parallel holds true also in regard to the consequences of each; for as all, who are born of men, mind by nature the things of the flesh,

so, all, who are born of God, mind the things of the spirit; and as no man was ever yet born, who did not, when he had opportunity, prove himself to be a human creature by acting on human motives and following human objects, so never was any man regenerated, who did not in the course of things prove himself a divine creature by acting on divine motives and following divine objects, being born again not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and endureth for ever. For—
‘Whatsoever is born of God’—says saint John—
‘overcometh the world. Whosoever is born of
‘God sinneth not. But he, that is begotten of
‘God, keepeth himself, and that wicked one
‘toucheth him not’—and again—‘Whosoever is
‘born of God, doth not commit sin: for his
‘seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, be-
‘cause he is born of God’—: and what saint Paul meant by a new creature, he too has particularly explained to us by using it indiscriminately with faith, which worketh by love; for, whereas he has observed both in the fifth and sixth chapters of his epistle to the Galatians, that in Christ Jesus neither circumcision

availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, he has opposed to these outward states in the one place the first of the two expressions, in the other the second.

If this then be a correct statement of the scriptural doctrine of regeneration, as I think a careful comparison of all the texts, relating to it, will prove, then in order to show, that regeneration always accompanies baptism, it will be necessary to make it appear, that all, who are baptized, become really renewed in the spirit of their minds so as afterwards to seek heavenly things and to pursue divine objects, a position, too hopeless to be maintained. Indeed so extraordinary a notion as that of any inseparable connexion between the acts of baptism and of regeneration, a notion at variance with all experience and repugnant to all the natural expectations of human reason, could hardly have been entertained by any one, if it had not been thought, that some texts of scripture look that way, and that some passages in the fathers support the connexion. The fathers it is impossible to consider on the present occasion. But the texts in scripture, which seem to have occa-

sioned this perplexity, it is of more importance to examine; and I trust, that a closer inspection will convince us, that, far from implying any such necessary connexion, they proceed rather on a presumption, that they are distinct, and actually set the two parts of true baptism in opposition to each other.

Now there is no text, which has been more insisted upon by advocates for the identity of regeneration and baptism than that remarkable declaration concerning God, our saviour, in the third chapter of saint Paul's epistle to Titus—
'Not by works of righteousness, which we have
'done, but according to his mercy he saved us
'by the washing of regeneration and renewing
'of the holy ghost.' In order however to obtain from these words the doctrine in question the washing of regeneration must be interpreted the regeneration of washing, that so the phrase may import an internal effect, produced by the external water, instead of being, as it would appear to be at present, a figurative description of the internal effect of regeneration, explained by an allusion to the external effect of the symbol, so, that in fact baptism is here only alluded to, while

regeneration is expressed, or at least, if they are both expressed together, it is in a form of words parallel to that of saint Peter in the text, as though the apostle had said—‘ According to his ‘ mercy he saved us by baptism; by which how- ‘ ever I mean not the putting away of the filth ‘ of the flesh, but the washing of regeneration, ‘ the putting away of the pollutions of the spi- ‘ rit, and the renewing of the holy ghost.’

Another part of scripture, alleged to support the opinion, now combated, is a train of expressions, used by saint Paul, which seem to identify the spiritual union between believers and Christ with baptism. ‘ We are buried with him’ (says that apostle) by baptism unto death,’—and again —‘ buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye ‘ are risen with him through the faith of the ope- ‘ ration of God, who hath raised him from the ‘ dead’—: and many other such phrases he adopts, never however without some such qualifying expression as that, which follows the phrase, first quoted—‘ that, like as Christ was raised up ‘ from the dead by the glory of the father, even ‘ so we also should walk in newness of life’—; in which it is manifestly implied, that, unless

newness of life follows burial by baptism, the baptism itself is ineffectual in its purpose and defeated in its end.

To these texts from the epistles may be added those passages, in which our saviour declares—
‘Except a man be born of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God’—; by which words the advocates for regeneration by baptism think their argument compleated, and they say—‘What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder!’—: and yet those, who maintain the opposite opinion, may fairly adopt the same language, acknowledging, as they needs must, that God hath often in practice as well as in the passage last read and in the text joined regeneration and baptism together, and devoutly wishing, that what he hath so joined men would not, as they too often do, by their apostacy, disobedience, and carnal mind put asunder. It is undoubtedly his will, who will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth, that all baptized persons, all, who receive the water, should be born of the spirit; and it is man only, who effects a divorce between them. The separation however in nu-

merous or rather innumerable instances is too certain. It is a matter of universal observation, and is exemplified in all, to whom it has happened according to the true proverb—‘The sow, that was washed, is turned again to her wallowing in the mire.’

On the contrary there are passages in scripture, which not only imply, but in the apprehension of many at least appear directly to state the distinctness often in time and always in fact of the two operations in question. The very institution of baptism by Christ himself is of the number. ‘Go ye,’ (says he) ‘and make all nations my disciples!’ How? First ‘baptizing them in the name of the father and of the son and of the holy ghost,’ and then ‘teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you.’ Where the first means are employed, there is baptism. Where the second are complied with, there only is regeneration. For of his own will begat he us, as saint James says, not with water only, but with the word of truth: and to whom gave he power to become the sons of God, but, as saint John describes them, to them, that believe on his name, which were born,

as he proceeds immediately to state, not of the will of man, but of God?

We need not however search for verbal declarations of a doctrine, which is attested by so clear a fact as that of Simon, the sorcerer. It is said, that Simon believed Philip, when he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, and that, after he was baptized, he continued with Philip and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs, which were done. But yet subsequently, as soon as he saw the extraordinary gifts of the holy ghost conferred by the hands of Peter and John, the marks of an unregenerated spirit burst forth even in his eager desire to obtain so invaluable a blessing; and by offering to purchase the gift of God with money he drew upon himself the following awful sentence from saint Peter—‘Thou hast neither
‘part, nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not
‘right in the sight of God; for I perceive, that
‘thou art in the gall of bitterness and in the bond
‘of iniquity.’

Such grounds there are in scripture and experience for believing, that the mere putting away of the filth of the flesh in baptism does not

include, produce, or convey either regeneration or what must ever be an unfailing test and consequence of regeneration in the sense, just ascribed to it, the answer of a good conscience toward God.

Still it may be urged, that the identity of regeneration and baptism, whether taught in scripture or not, is taught by our church, who, after the mere ceremony of baptism has been performed to a new-born infant, directs her minister to say—
‘ Seeing now, dearly beloved brethren, that this
‘ child is regenerate, let us give thanks unto al-
‘ mighty God for this benefit!’—: and yet even this inference does not appear to be correct. The church regards all her members, as regenerate, as is evident from the whole strain of the baptismal, burial, and churching services, and of every other, which is addressed to individuals, where, being neither required, nor indeed qualified or even permitted to exercise a just judgment between her children, though it was well known from the first, that tares would be mixed with the wheat, she pronounces upon all indiscriminately the judgment of charity and gives them the blessing of faith. The same conduct is also observable in the epistles of saint Paul, who, when writing even to

corrupted churches, whom he reproves for their faults and threatens with apostolic censure, yet calls them in a body, one with another, saints, elect of God, and members of his kingdom. But, that our church does not absolutely identify regeneration with baptism, and consequently, that she could not design the preceding description to be applied to all her members indifferently, though she did not herself feel entitled to make the discrimination, is proved by the prayers in the same service, that the infant, coming to God's holy baptism, may receive remission of his sins by spiritual regeneration, and that God would give his holy spirit, which blessing is implored without even naming the water, that so he may be born again. She professes a christian and scriptural belief indeed, that Jesus Christ hath promised in his gospel to grant all these things, that are thus prayed for, and that he will for his part most surely keep and perform his promise even to the regeneration of every baptized member, but then adds, that, as the promise was a covenanted promise, it might be cancelled by a failure in the conditions, and that in order to give it effect it is necessary, that the infant also should

on his part effectually renounce the devil and all his works, constantly believe God's holy word, and obediently keep his commandments; which duties remaining to the end of life in all their parts unperformed, baptism is made void, the promise made of none effect, and regeneration, which is the substance of it, neither takes place actually, nor is expected by our church to take place.

Indeed for any church to hold at the same time the two doctrines of justification by faith and of regeneration by external baptism would be to hold principles, inconsistent with each other; for it has appeared from the language of saint Paul, that both these are benefits, conferred at the same moment and promised to the same faith, though that faith operates in the one a change of heart, and in the other a change of condition, changes however, which either must exist together or not at all. Our church therefore, having stated the first of these doctrines explicitly, leaves the second to be deduced by inference: and consequently, when she uses the expression, as she does in the third part of her homily on salvation—‘ After we are baptized or ‘ justified’—, since the latter term cannot be ex-

planatory or synonymous (for that would be to say in opposition to the eleventh article, that she maintains, that we are justified by baptism), it must be interpreted, as corrective of the former.

She maintains indeed in her twentyseventh article (and it is an article, like the rest of them, inexpugnable to every argument, which is not also levelled against scripture), that baptism is a sign of regeneration or new birth. But by declaring it a sign she has virtually protested against that tenet, which would confound it with the thing signified. It may be argued perhaps, that to strip it of its regenerating efficacy is to leave it a form without substance, a sacrament without grace, and a sign without signification. But in fact it is no such thing. The form is not the substance, though it cannot exist without it: and accordingly, when baptism is not accompanied or followed by regeneration, the person remains virtually unbaptized; for we may say of baptism, as saint Paul did of circumcision, that he is not a christian, which is one outwardly, neither is that baptism, which is outward in the flesh, but he is a christian, which is one inwardly, and baptism is that of the heart in the spirit and not in the

letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God. Nor further is the sign left without signification, because it is not confounded with the thing signified. On the contrary, were the two things inseparable, there would be no use in the sign; for the thing signified might then speak for itself, whereas the very use of a sign is to bear a testimony, which the thing signified is itself unable to bear. The crown distinguishes the sovereign in a crowd and is necessary to point him out to the people, while yet it would be no distinction to any, but the sovereign, though undoubtedly others might be bold enough to wear it. The sign of baptism therefore, like the blood upon the doorposts of the Israelites, is not without its signification. It signifies, that the person, who possesses it, is regenerated, or, as our church expresses it, it represents unto us our profession, which is to follow the example of our saviour, Christ, and be made like unto him, that, as he died and rose again for us, so should we, who are baptized, die from sin and rise again unto righteousness, continually mortifying all our evil and corrupt affections, and daily proceeding in all virtue and godliness of living. Unless this effect follows, the

sign is indeed without the thing signified, and the representation without the thing represented: for as in the case, above cited, they were not all Israel, who were of Israel, although by virtue of the blood over their door-posts they saved their firstborn and were themselves carried through the red sea, so neither on the other hand are they all christians, who are baptized, though by virtue of their baptism they are entitled to all the privileges of the visible church and must be admitted to the external celebration of the lord's supper. Signs indeed are chiefly so used. They are to remind us and others of the thing signified, which is not always present with the sign. The marriage-ring for instance reminds the wife of her duty even to her absent husband and admonishes strangers not to approach the wife of another. The woman would still be a wife, although she did not wear her ring. She could not indeed be made a wife without one; nor would she be made a wife by wearing it. But, being worn by a wife, it bears witness to a truth, of which she is conscious, and of which others are thus apprised. Were husbands always present with their wives, or wives always dutiful to their husbands, the

use of a sign would be superfluous. It is from the possibility of unconjugal conduct in a married woman, that the ring derives its value; and hence it serves, as a witness to herself and others of her new relationship; and, as a witness and token of her marriage, it represents to her her duty and signifies her subjection.

A question however, which has been often started, may here arise. If baptism and regeneration be thus distinct, if the conditions of the christian church remain unaffected by that ceremony, why then are infants baptized, when by reason of their tender age they cannot perform them? And the answer, given in our catechism, is sufficient to meet it. ‘Because they promise
‘ them by their sureties; which promise, when
‘ they come to age, themselves are bound to per-
‘ form.’ Otherwise, as is implied, all the benefit of baptism is forfeited. Still however some benefit is evidently supposed to accrue from baptism independently of any performance of the conditions, because otherwise the rite itself, instead of being administered in infancy, might be delayed to an age, when the conditions would become practicable. In fact the benefit, which the

church supposes to accrue from it, is thus stated in a rubric. ‘It is certain by God’s word, that children, which are baptized, dying, before they commit actual sin, are undoubtedly saved.’

The majority of the human species die, before they come to years of discretion: and therefore, if full age were made necessary for the administration of baptism, the majority of mankind must die, unbaptized. To obviate this awful danger, the almighty has been pleased to regard children, as a part of their parents, and the children therefore of believing parents, as entitled to all the privileges of saving faith, until by such offences as did not flow merely from the corruption of their nature through original sin they separate themselves from that connexion, God having graciously bound himself by his covenant, that none, who, however early, are baptized into the second Adam, shall perish through the fault of the first. Hence circumcision was performed at eight days of age; and baptism is administered to tender infants. The remission of original sin in such cases is free and unconditional. Renewed offences indeed will renew the debt

and reopen the wound, which had been closed in baptism. But, as children were without their own wills made partakers of the sin of Adam, so it is just, that they should without their own efforts be made partakers of the merits of Christ, though in either case a change in their subsequent conduct would superinduce a change of their previous condition.

Independently however of this consideration, important as it is, there are great and essential advantages, attending the early baptism of children, which recommend the practice and have recommended it in all ages of the church, as likely to obtain a peculiar blessing from the almighty. In the first place we have thus the proofs of original corruption continually brought before our minds, when we see children, who can neither speak, nor act, requiring absolution. In the second the child is in his own name made the particular object of the prayers of a congregation already in covenant with the redeemer, and interested in the vows of christian sponsors, being himself also admitted into a covenant, before he is aware, the conditions of which are so advantageous as to impose upon him an obliga-

tion, when he knows them, to observe them. In the third the parents and godparents are hereby admonished of the serious and sacred duties, which bind them to the object of their prayers, and of the solemn vow, promise, and profession, which he has there made by them, so, that, if there be any seriousness in the ordinance, or respect for godliness in those, who concur in it, the child is carried back from the church with many advantages towards being trained in the way he should go.

It appears then, that although baptism is not the same with regeneration and does not convey it, there are yet advantages enough, attending the administration of the external rite, to make it our interest as well as our duty to comply with it: and thus, although, to recur to our original distribution, the mere putting away of the filth of the flesh does not include, produce, or convey the answer of a good conscience towards God, yet no one can expect to have the answer of a good conscience towards God, who refuses to submit to the external rite of baptism. It seems therefore extraordinary, that a large body

of men, like the quakers, professing themselves christians, and exemplary in the discharge of almost every relative and social duty, should yet persist in neglecting a christian sacrament. Regarding the answer of a good conscience, as every thing, they think the putting away of the filth of the flesh nothing: nor are there wanting others, who, though they do not neglect, undervalue an ordinance, which comes to us, recommended by the command of Christ and the practice of his apostles.

We have dwelt so long upon the first head, that it will be expedient for us to be shorter upon the second. On this however the text is no less decisive than it was on the others. The much controverted passage, which precedes it, is not necessary to our present purpose. From the words themselves, which have been selected, it seems plain, that baptism is there represented, as the like figure to the ark, wherein few (that is eight) souls were saved by water. Therefore, as a mere belief in the word and longsuffering of God was not sufficient in those days to save the believer, unless he also entered into the ark, so neither is the answer of a good conscience suffi-

cient to save us now, unless we enter into the church by baptism. Nay. Rather, as belief in the word of God necessarily led men at that time to enter into the ark, so will the answer of a good conscience in these days prompt us to submit to the initiatory rite of baptism.

Observe, how the apostles and first preachers of the gospel insisted on this rite! and it will be impossible to contemplate it, as a matter of indifference. When the multitude, who were gathered together on the day of pentecost, said to Peter and to the rest of the apostles—‘ Men and ‘ brethren, what shall we do?’—, Peter said unto them—‘ Repent and be baptized, every one of ‘ you! Repent in the first place, and, when you ‘ have repented, do not rest, satisfied with your ‘ repentance, but come, and be baptized!’ So, when the eunuch said to Philip—‘ What doth ‘ hinder me to be baptized?’—Philip said—‘ If ‘ thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest.’ Thus repentance and faith were not judged sufficient without baptism. When too saint Peter saw the holy ghost fall on Cornelius and those, who were with him, he was so far from regarding that extraordinary gift, as superseding the

necessity of baptism, that he said—‘ Can any
‘ man forbid water, that these should not be bap-
‘ tized, which have received the holy ghost as
‘ well as we?’—; and he commanded them to be
baptized in the name of the lord.

In a word baptism to a christian is like coronation to a sovereign. He might be a king and exercise all the functions of royalty without it; and yet, should he refuse to take those oaths, which are required from him at his coronation, such a neglect might be sufficient to unking him.

Indeed, when God has commanded any thing, whatever it be, it seems too obvious to be denied, that the answer of a good conscience can only be obtained by a compliance with the command, that in fact no conscience can be good, nor any faith genuine without it: for what in fact is the question, which a good conscience has to answer, but this—‘ Have you done that, which was given
‘ you to do? Have you kept the conditions of
‘ my covenant?’—? and how can he, who has neglected the divine ordinance of baptism, answer these questions rightly? For it is written, not—
‘ he, that believeth’—simply, but ‘ he, that be-
‘ lieveth and is baptized, shall be saved.’ As well

therefore might Naaman be justified for having refused to wash in Jordan, as a christian for refusing to be baptized. And here it is necessary to interpose a still further observation, that baptism, to be valid, must be rightly performed and consequently by a rightful minister. That is, as our article has defined it, by one, who has been chosen and called to this work by men, who have public authority given unto them in the congregation to call and send ministers into the lord's vineyard. What is that authority, and who are thus lawfully sent, it is foreign to our present object to discuss. Only we, who are members of the church of England on principle, cannot fail to maintain the necessity, where it can be obtained, of episcopal ordination.

Did we therefore know nothing more upon this subject, than that Christ had instituted the rite in question, that he, who is our lord, had said—‘Go and baptize all nations!’—and added—‘Lo! I am with you always even unto the end of the world’—, it might surely be sufficient to determine our compliance, and should teach us without inquiring either into the reasons of his appointment or the benefits to be derived from our own

observance to maintain its inviolable necessity. We ought to come to it, as a matter of obedience, leaving to him the question of benefit. But in fact we know much more. We know, that the command of Christ is confirmed by the example of his apostles and even by his own; for though he had no need to be baptized as to the inward part, he yet chose to be baptized outwardly and gave this for his reason—‘ Thus it becometh us ‘ to fulfil all righteousness.’ We know too from the text as well as from other parts of scripture, that although the putting away of the filth of the flesh is not sufficient without the answer of a good conscience towards God, and although even the answer of a good conscience is not sufficient without putting away the filth of the flesh, yet baptism, which properly consists of both parts united, doth indeed save us.

The direct construction of the words may not seem to favor this description of baptism: for it is an exclusive, not a comparative expression. The words are—‘ Not the putting away of the ‘ filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God.’ But it is evident, that the exclusive form is here substituted for the

comparative: for, whatever may be thought of the naked rite, stripped of the grace, implied by it, the answer of a good conscience without outward ablution is certainly not baptism and cannot be meant by it: for which reason the expression must be understood, like many others in the sacred volume and particularly that remarkable one—‘I will have mercy and not sacrifice’—, as a strong way of making a comparison to the disadvantage of that part of it, which is denied. The text therefore asserts on the whole, that the putting away of the filth of the flesh and the answer of a good conscience toward God are both necessary to the completeness of baptism, but that the latter is much more necessary than the former, that the one in short is the essential, the other the formal part of baptism, and that, when united, they save us. For as many as have been so baptized into Christ, have put on Christ; and they are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

How then, in what sense can baptism be said to save us? This is the last point we have to determine. I pass by here the question, important

as it is, what is meant by a good conscience in the passage before us, further than to observe, that it must have been enlightened by faith and purified by good works: for otherwise (says saint Paul) ‘even our conscience is defiled.’ Even from this observation however it is evident, that as in the rite itself there is no virtue, to which a saving effect can be imputed, so in the good conscience, which is implied by it, there must always be a remainder of evil, sufficient to hinder us from trusting to it for salvation. How then can baptism, which, as we have shown, is made up of these two parts, save us? Not by its own merit clearly, but, as the apostle goes on to explain in the words immediately following the text, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who is gone into heaven and is on the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.

This then is that, by which in strict truth we are saved: for—‘Jesus Christ’—we are repeatedly told—‘died for our sins and rose again for our justification: and therefore it is, that we are ‘buried with him by baptism into death, that, ‘like as Christ was raised up from the dead by

‘ the glory of the father, even so we also should ‘ walk in newness of life.’ The question consequently, which we have to answer, is, how it can be said, that baptism gives us an interest in this resurrection, or how it aids us towards the attainment of that newness of life, which is mentioned, as the end and design of it.

And first it must conduce towards this end, as an act of simple obedience to the will of God. Every such act must be acceptable to him ; and the grace of God may be confidently expected to attend it. But the service of baptism stands on higher ground than others : for it is itself a divine ordinance ; and a special blessing may be presumed to accompany the performance of a service, which was ordained by special command. Hence it was, that all the people, who had been baptized with the baptism of John, justified God, when they heard the words of Jesus, while (it is added) the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him.

But a still more efficacious way, by which baptism may be said to save us, is that, which is fully stated by the article : for by it, as by an

instrument, they, that receive baptism rightly (that is externally by the putting away of the filth of the flesh and internally by the answer of a good conscience toward God), are grafted into the church, the promises of forgiveness of sins and of our adoption to be the sons of God by the holy ghost are visibly signed and sealed, faith is confirmed, and grace increased by virtue of prayer unto God. The comparison is strictly exact. These blessings are confirmed, as by an instrument. But they are confirmed only to those, who receive it rightly. We know, that a legal instrument confirms the possession of certain property to those, who are described in it. They might have been entitled to the property, before they received the instrument. But they are not confirmed in it before: and on the other hand, should the instrument fall into the hands of other persons, who are not described there, it would confirm to them nothing, but remain a dead letter without use or meaning. Baptism is just such an instrument. It confirms to those, who answer the purposes of baptism, who believe and repent and have the answer of a good conscience toward God, all the

blessings of the new covenant. They may look on that seal and assure themselves of pardon. They may keep it, as a testimony of their covenanted right even to the kingdom of heaven through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, so long as they answer the conditions, contained in it, whereas to those, who answer none of those conditions, who are not described in the instrument, who have neither repentance, nor faith, nor a good conscience to correspond with its representations, it confirms nothing. It is to them indeed a sign without signification, a letter deprived of spirit, a key, which they cannot use, and a seal, which they cannot open.

Further, as the legal instrument is sometimes said to entitle a proprietor to his estate, though it only records his title and is a proof to himself and others of his right to it, so is baptism also here said to save us, not as if it did so by itself (our salvation must doubtless be sought from another source, even from Christ Jesus, whose resurrection, if we believe in him, in effect is ours), but because it records our title to be accounted his disciples and is a token both to ourselves and others, that we have been received

into covenant with him and shall finally on answering to the profession, which baptism represents, obtain all the privileges of his covenant, even everlasting salvation.

Such then is the necessity, such the use, and such the nature of christian baptism. It is not regeneration. But neither is it any thing without it. It is not the mere putting away of the filth of the flesh. But neither is the answer of a good conscience without such cleansing sufficient. But when these things go together, when the person, who bears the symbol, answers the description, when he satisfies the profession and fulfils the meaning of baptism, then and then only may he with joy draw water out of the wells of salvation. Then only is baptism said to save us. We must regard the rite with reverence, but not with idolatry, observe it, as a divine command, and keep it, as a divine promise, but not trust to it instead of Christ. In short it is necessary, but not sufficient for us. Yet neither is any thing else sufficient without it: for, as our blessed saviour himself has summed up the whole, that has been said,—‘ He; that believeth and is bap-

‘tized, shall be saved.’ Even faith (we see) without baptism may be unavailing: and so assuredly will baptism, unaccompanied with faith; for—‘He, that believeth not,’ whether baptized or unbaptized, (adds that same infallible authority), ‘shall be damned.’

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